KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

Family strategies for education: The Chinese in Flanders.

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Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de graad van Doctor in de Sociale en culturele antropologie

2016

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De verantwoordelijkheid voor de ingenomen standpunten berust alleen bij de auteur.
Gepubliceerd door:
Onderzoekseenheid: Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre [IMMRC],
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“Education breeds confidence.
Confidence breeds hope.
Hope breeds peace.”

(Confucius)

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has taken some years to write. It was an overtly challenging experience but in the end also a truly gratifying one. For this I have many people to be grateful to. My thanks must go first to Professor Johan Leman for offering me the opportunity to join the *Bet You!* Study on the school careers of children with a migration background. Taking part in this study has opened an entire new world for me to discover and to learn from.

My most sincere and deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor Philip Hermans, for without him it would have been impossible to complete this study. Vital were his continuous support, perennial faith in me and above all his altruism and patience, despite my recurring demons of procrastination and limited self-confidence. I have particularly appreciated the critical, but ever stimulating and motivating way in which he has mentored and accompanied me through the process. My gratitude and thanks must also go to my co-supervisor, Professor Ching Lin Pang, for offering me the initial and vital gateway to the Chinese community, as well as for giving me her critical insights from an emic as well as etic perspective. I also owe a special thanks to Professor Marie Mc. Andrew and her team from L'Université de Montréal (Canada) for giving me the chance to conduct comparative research on Chinese heritage education and the *Bet You*! team for accompanying me on this journey and offering concrete help.

I am forever indebted to Paul, my better half, for his indefatigably and substantive moral and emotional support. His pushpins, (late-night) talks and reflections, as well as his continued encouragement and overall help, have been invaluable in more ways than I could ever put into words. I could not have imagined a better companion and fellow traveller, both literally and symbolically. Many thanks must also go to my family and friends for their motivational words and continued support during these past years: my parents, Frank, Lot, Titi, and Sylvie for their welcome moments of lightness and solicitude; Edith for being partner in crime; Alexandra for setting the good example in the Tree House; Mark and Christine for offering me a second home in Leuven; and Sara for editing the text and providing insightful comments.

Last but not least, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Chinese families and numerous informants who shared their life experiences with me. Without their trust and candidness this research would never have been possible. Their narratives have made up its beginning and its end, in sum its ubiquitous oxygen. I thank my informants: the Chinese and Flemish school staff, the representatives of Chinese cultural and religious institutions, Chinese youngsters and many others. Finally, to all pupils: I truly hope that in my interpretations I have done justice to your perspectives and emotions. In random order: Sophie, Li-Na, Terry, Li-Zhi, Wu Guo, Amber, Mei-Lan, Ning, Chen Gao, Jiali, Ty-Lee, Lamchoi, Jacob, Julie, Limei, Yulian, Rose, Xiaoya, Kristina Wu, Shing, Sheng-Du, Sam, Lei, Lucas Lee, and their parents: Thank you for welcoming me into your worlds.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

1. Origin of the study

From January 2009 to December 2012 four main research centres in Flanders (HIVA Research Institute for Labour and Society, Catholic University of Leuven – IMMRC Intercultural, Migration and Minorities Research Centre, Catholic University of Leuven – CDL Centre for Diversity and Learning, University of Ghent – CEMIS Centre for Migration and Intercultural Studies, University of Antwerp) jointly carried out the interdisciplinary Strategic Basic Research Project (SBO) *Bet You!*[1] (cf. Clycq, Timmerman, Van Avermaet, Wets, & Hermans, 2014). Its primary objective was to study the school careers of pupils with an immigration background in Flanders, by which the main focus was put on four distinct ethnic groups in three different cities: Moroccan, Turkish, Polish and Chinese youngsters in the cities of Ghent, Antwerp and Genk. The study departed from the hypothesis that lower or higher educational performance of pupils results from a complex interplay between different variables on distinct levels. Individuals grow up and live in multiple spheres of influence, which include the major socializing institutions as family, school, peer group and neighbourhood as well as the broader national and global political/legal, cultural and socio-economic context. To arrive at a tenuous understanding of the successful or less successful school careers of pupils, the *Bet You!* Project aimed at examining the influence of some of these multiple contexts. Thereby a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative research methods was used, including a large-scale survey as well as in-depth ethnographic fieldwork within two major field sites: pupils' school and home context. I myself was offered the opportunity to conduct the ethnographic research on the Chinese community, which has laid the first and essential seeds for the study at hand. This implies that in this dissertation I have taken the quantitative and qualitative findings from the *Bet You!* Project as a basis to further deepen the qualitative component on the Chinese segment of the research.

[1] More detailed information on the *Bet You!* Study can be found on the following website: http://oprit14.drupalgardens.com/content/welkom-op-de-website-van-oprit-14-0

2. Problem statement & relevance of the study

Contemporary urban areas in Flanders are characterized by a high ethno-cultural diversity. During the last decades, a plethora of different policies have been installed to enable the emancipation and integration of the migrant population and to reduce social fragmentation of society. Within that process the role of education has been regarded vital. Academics and policy makers commonly consider the acquirement of the right educational qualifications as prerequisite to the integration of immigrant children into mainstream society. Particularly in the current knowledge society, attention to the educational attainment of immigrant youth is thought to be key to youngsters' future professional opportunities and competitive value on the labour market (Duquet, Glorieux, Laurijssen, & Van Dorsselaer, 2006; Jacobs, 2009). Schools thus bear an important responsibility for the social integration of students from distinct social and ethnic backgrounds.

Worldwide equity in education has become fundamental normative benchmark. However, although equal access to education was consolidated in most pluralistic western societies, true educational parity has far from been achieved. The chances of school success still are different for children from distinct social groups. Whereas societies and schools are expected to promote inclusiveness, eliminate barriers to learning, and foster academic success of all students, large discrepancies in educational output of pupils remain most evident. In various countries or regions, including Flanders, immigrant children keep showing lower performance levels and lower scores on standardized tests. They also display higher dropout rates in secondary education and lower participation rates in higher education (Van den Branden, Van Avermaet, & Van Houtte, 2011). In fact, according to the extensive Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the OESO, Flanders is among the leaders with respect to inequality in education. This is due to its huge 'achievement gap' between the best and worst performing students as well as between native and immigrant children (De Rynck, 2007; Jacobs, Rea, Teney, Callier, & Lothaire, 2009). Pupils whose parents are born abroad still perform significantly less well in school than their native counterparts (Duquet, Glorieux, Laurijssen, & Van Dorsselaer, 2006; Hirtt, Nicaise, & De Zutter, 2007; Nicaise, 2008; OECD, 2010; Van Avermaet, 2013; VLOR, 2013). More recent survey data from Flanders collected through the *Bet You!* Project strongly reaffirmed this existing stratification by showing a strong interconnection between variables such as socioeconomic status, ethnic background and educational outcomes (Clycq, Nouwen & Vandenbroucke, 2014). This means that despite

governmental efforts to democratize the education system, native students still experience greater advantages than immigrant children. While diversity was never so evident in our educational system, we continue to struggle with it.

Already since the late 1980s, the issue of educational disparity has given rise to a plethora of critical research on the causes of individual and intergroup differences in the school trajectories of immigrant youth in Flanders (Cammaert, 1993; Hermans, 1993, 1995; Leman, 1986; Roosens, 1986; Stallaert, 1993). Characteristic of these studies is their focus on final educational output and two major concepts, namely culture and structure. In most general terms culture is referred to as group-specific values and norms that are believed to either match or mismatch with those of mainstream society (Zhou & Li, 2003). Stemming from this line of thought part of current public discourse in Flanders tends to hold immigrant groups accountable (or at least partly) for their lower educational outcomes. In particular the discourse of the growing right-wing political movement in Flanders gives away a belief in migrants alleged 'unwillingness to adapt to Flemish values and norms'. In addition to cultural factors, also structural elements are stated to cause educational variability. These include immigrants' socioeconomic disadvantaged position, residential segregation, labour market conditions, immigration selectivity, and institutionalized discrimination (Zhou & Kim, 2006).

Given the abundance of research on the causes of school success or failure with migrant youth in Flanders, then how can this study still contribute to the academic and societal debate? First of all, given the vast presence and increase of immigrant children in our mainstream educational institutions, the current ethno-stratification is obviously problematic and worth our continued scholarly attention. The focus of most studies, however, has drawn attention to immigrant students' needs and barriers to learning. The findings of those studies are to help educational stakeholders to modify teaching practices and policies. Unfortunately, this focus on barriers has led us to view immigrant students as problematic per se and has obscured the successes of individual or certain segments of immigrant students (Yoon, 2012). Hardly any academic inquiry has intended to shed light on successful trajectories of immigrant youngsters in Belgium and the roots of such educational prosperity. There is, however, no question about the existence of such successes (cf. Antrop-González, 2013; Clycq et al., 2014; Hermans, 1995; Kavadias, 2013).

Secondly, as a result of this predominant focus on the troubled school careers of minority youth, most attention has been paid to pupils belonging to the classic minorities, in particular the Moroccans and Turks who appear over-represented in secondary vocational and technical education and more often than native pupils leave secondary school without any qualification (Duquet et al., 2006). Markedly missing in Flemish educational research is attention for the societal and educational position of other and smaller immigrant groups, like the Chinese. Quantitative data from the recent *Bet You!* Study, however, revealed that in secondary education in Flanders Asian youngsters are overrepresented in the highest track (ASO). With a total presence of 54.2 per cent in the second level of secondary school, they even outperform the native Belgian students (52%). Internationally, Asian immigrant communities, particularly the Chinese, have been designated as 'success stories' of economic and educational integration and mobility (Chao, 1996; Francis & Archer, 2005; Kao, 1995; Song & Wang, 2004; Zhou & Kim, 2006). In countries like the United States and Canada, for example, the Chinese have been lauded as a model minority because they not only outperform most other ethnic groups in their host countries but also their native counterparts (Chao, 1996; Francis & Archer, 2005; Li, 2001a; Modood, 2004; Rijkschroeff, 1998). Their overall academic success has inspired much research on the predictors of this high achievement. This has resulted in an abundance of studies on the educational experiences of Chinese diasporans in the above-mentioned classic immigration countries as well as in some European neighbouring states, as for example the UK. Yet, so far the experiences of the Chinese community in Flanders remain largely uncovered. As research on ethnic minorities and their representation in the general societal debate are largely driven by policies aiming to remedy the problematic areas, the Chinese community's educational realm appeared destined to stay unveiled. Nevertheless, with China's rapidly shifting power position in the world and the growing presence of Chinese students, academics and entrepreneurs in Belgium, the Flemish policy makers, academics and media alike are becoming more and more aware of the presence of the already established Chinese community. Specific focus on Flemish Chinese families thus warrants further attention.

Moreover, although the stratified pattern of school success along ethnic and socioeconomic lines is clear, in-depth research is still lacking on the influence of family strategies on the process and outcomes of that differentiation. In Flanders and beyond, parent or family involvement in education is considered by researchers, educational stakeholders and policy makers as an essential condition for children's learning and development. Numerous

international studies have pointed to positive correlations between parent and family involvement on the one hand and children's success in school on the other hand (Morreel, Van Avermaet & Vanderlinde, 2012). The involvement is said to lead to higher wellbeing with students, more positive attitudes towards education and learning, less school dropout, and increased participation in higher education (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2011; Ho & Kwong, 2013; Menheere & Hooge, 2010; VLOR, 2011). In fact, in the Flemish educational field, learning is increasingly considered as resulting from a complex interplay between school, home and the broader society. However, despite this overall positive view of parent involvement in education, to many stakeholders within the educational field the concept nevertheless remains a thorny issue (Morreel et al., 2012). Recently, the Bet You! Study pointed to the existence of divergent views between Flemish school staff and immigrant parents on home-school cooperation and on the role of each actor in the education of children. It appears that in Flanders, various school staff members feel they have to compensate for limited parental involvement and an insufficiently stimulating study climate at home.

In current Flemish education literature and models on parent or family involvement in education, the latter is, however, mainly analysed from the perspective of the schools. The questions thereby raised mainly focus on the extent to which parents have direct contact with school, framed in terms of attendance at parent teacher conferences or involvement in school boards. This approach to family involvement tends to disregard the complex realities and the diverse contexts within which the families give meaning to education and children's schooling (Morreel et al., 2012). The question thus remains how families with a migration background employ different strategies to create an environment for their child that is conducive or counteractive for educational success. With specific reference to immigrants from Sinic Civilizations, Qin, Ran and Han (2011) for example showed that although Sinic parents are indeed only to a limited extent directly involved in children's education at school, they are nonetheless concerned with it in many other ways that have a positive effect on their offspring's educational outcomes.

This dissertation aims to develop a broader understanding of the ways in which Chinese families develop and negotiate strategies for education and the latter's impact on the general educational attainment of first and second-generation Chinese youngsters in mainstream Flemish education. Unlike much other research located at the academic crossroad

of migration and education, this study does not merely focus on educational output. Instead it is primarily concerned with providing a thick description and in-depth analysis of Chinese families' beliefs, viewpoints, attitudes and behaviour with respect to education. Central attention will be given to the routes taken by Chinese immigrant families and the strategies they develop and deploy to maximize benefits for children's educational career and broader future. Questions are raised about the ways in which Chinese pupils and their parents conceptualize success and failure and about the forms of capital they use to their benefit. What kind of success-promoting elements can be distinguished? What holds families back and what are their discursive, attitudinal and behavioural reactions to those impediments?

Finally, within existing studies on Chinese immigrants' educational attainment, there is a clear lack of Chinese children's perspectives (Lay-Clayton, 2014). The majority of contemporary studies typically portray Chinese children as objects of adult concern by which their agency and impact on household dynamics are largely being concealed. In order to bring about a fuller understanding of Chinese family strategies for education, children's voices also need to be taken into account. By treating the Chinese families, which includes children and parents, as active agents in the realm of social mobility, the current longitudinal study aims to fill the above-mentioned research gaps and hopes to shed light on the complex mechanisms underlying the Chinese youngsters' school success.

The central research question of the dissertation is formulated as followed:

How are family strategies centred on education constituted and negotiated by Chinese immigrant families in Flanders in relation to the host society and its educational system as well as in relation to the own ethnic community?

The central research question hypothesizes the existence of distinct expectations and cultural expressions centred on education and concomitant identities that interact and that are negotiated and/or ascribed across different social contexts. Hence it encloses the notions of 'power', 'change' and the depiction of cultural elements as variable entities. In the next chapter, in which I discuss the overall theoretical frame underpinning the dissertation, the central research question will be deconstructed in a delineated set of subquestions and research hypotheses. In Part II then these subquestions and hypotheses will be analysed and reviewed based on the study's empirical findings.

3. Synopsis of contents

The dissertation consists of two parts. Part one includes four distinct chapters that state the general background of the study. It opens with chapter two that situates the research within a more comprehensive theoretical framework, which is necessary to answer the research question in a way that connects with wider explanations. The chapter is divided into different subsections, each of which examines the primary anthropological and non-anthropological themes and concepts that I applied to analyse and structure the data. A full picture of the views of any particular author or school is, however, never offered. Instead I indicate why a particular body of work was thought to be useful to the present inquiry. In chapter three I turn my attention to the migratory background of the Chinese community in Belgium. In order to account for the growing complexity of the migration context due to globalization I also briefly outline the broader history of the Chinese Diaspora around the world. Thereupon I give a description of the Chinese community in Flanders in terms of demographic distribution, socio-economic status, linguistic background, and educational position. Writing about family strategies of Chinese immigrants centred around education inevitably also requires a diachronic perspective and thus a succinct historic overview of the development of the educational system in the respondents' countries of origin. A complete history of education policies in China and Hong Kong during the 20th century to date is, however, both impossible to cover and unnecessary. Therefore, chapter four seeks to highlight only key events and features that showed to be of particular relevance for the analysis of the data. Chapter five presents the overall design and methodology of the research. A first section of this chapter outlines the socio-ecological approach as the study's central epistemology and introduces the ethnographic field, the research sample and the main criteria used for selecting respondents. A second section offers a review of the different methods adopted during the study and of the procedure applied for analysing the research data. A last part comprises a limited anthropological reflexive monograph on my personal experiences with the process of 'doing ethnography'.

The second part encompasses the main research findings and presents a critical analysis of the different dynamics influencing the educational success of the Chinese youngsters. Each of the chapters in this part deals with a detailed analysis of a specific theme. While some of the topics were already identified at the outset of the inquiry, others have emerged in the course of the study. In chapter six I introduce the specific migration and

family background of the Chinese pupils involved in the research. The first part of this chapter provides a more detailed background to the migration histories of the Chinese families and highlights what motivated them to consider emigration. Subsequent parts zoom in on the families' socio-demographic features, including the parents' occupational position as well as the educational status of both parents and pupils. Next a glance is cast on the respondents' religious orientation. This is followed in chapter seven by a detailed analysis of the motivational dynamics of Chinese pupils' school achievement. In this chapter I illustrate the aspirations held by parents and pupils for the future and analyse how these are shaped by contextual factors, personal life experiences and cultural beliefs. For the most part this chapter is concerned with the purpose and causes of ambitions for the future, and as such largely elaborates on findings of the previous chapters.

Subsequently, in chapter eight, attention is paid to the ways in which the Chinese respondents act upon the aspirations they have set out. It does so by uncovering the different types and levels of Chinese parental involvement as well as by elucidating how this plurality of praxes are perceived and understood by the different parties, including parents, pupils and Flemish school staff. Next, in the ninth chapter, I provide an overview of the afterschool time use of the Chinese youngsters and the families' interpretations of down time. The broad concept of 'leisure' or 'afterschool time use' is subdivided into formal recreation and labour-related activities in the home-context. In each of these sections light is shed on the distinct concrete activities in which the Chinese pupils were found to engage in and the question is raised how these form part or relate to broader family strategies for education. The data is framed within a more in-depth analysis of the complex interactions between education, leisure participation, ethnicity and integration. Thereupon, from a comparative perspective the tenth chapter sheds light on the role of Chinese community schools in the educational trajectory of Chinese youngsters and in the social positioning of Chinese families in Flanders and Quebec. It explores processes of identity construction by analysing the extent to and the ways in which respondents rely upon these institutional spaces for intergenerational continuity and for exchanging cultural resources and knowledge with in-group members. Finally, this is followed in chapter 11 by the main conclusions and suggestions for further research.

PART I:

THEORETICAL & METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Chapter 2

Theoretical frame: main concepts & issues

The research question in itself encloses various theoretical concepts, hypotheses and sub-questions that reflect different levels of analysis. A more comprehensive theoretical framework is necessary to answer the questions in a way that connects with wider explanations. Although anthropology has a distinctive methodology and is informed by a discipline specific literature, it does not exclude crossing disciplines in order to strengthen the thickness of the ethnographic account. Various anthropologists have gone beyond the ethnographic concepts and theories by borrowing and incorporating interests and ideas that traditionally belonged to other humanistic and social disciplines, including history, sociology, psychology and educational sciences, or exact sciences (Dove, 2002; Zou & Trueba, 2002). According to Dove (2002) such interdisciplinary borrowing is an old and important source of scholarly advancement in anthropology. More than a decade ago Klein (1996) insisted on boundaries of academic disciplines being divisive barriers, but also permeable membranes. She argued that there might be different reasons for permeation, the borrowing of concepts and theories being one of them, with the ultimate objective to make better anthropology.

This chapter is divided into different subsections, each of which considers the primary anthropological and non-anthropological theories and concepts that are applied to analyse and structure the data, which in turn were influenced by the particularity of the fieldwork. A full picture of the views of any particular author or school is never offered. Instead it is indicated why a particular body of work is thought to be useful to the present inquiry. Based on the socio-ecological underpinnings of the methodology, for the construction of the theoretical framework I approach the complex social phenomenon of educational success or difficulties as influenced by various factors, and as such focus on contextuality, on mutual influence and on two- (or multiple-) way traffic between the individual and his surroundings. Departing from the theoretical framework, at the end of this chapter the central research question will be deconstructed into different subquestions.

1. Conceptualizing educational success

The term 'success' in education has been widely used to describe multiple outcomes. Throughout the vast literature it can mean anything from school attendance, high grade point averages, retention, degree completion, academic performance that complies with or even exceeds school requirements, active social interaction with teachers and peers inside and outside the classroom, to educational aspirations (Gardner, 2009; Sun, 2013; Yoon, 2012). In many cases, however, the definition of success remains elusive. So, how does one differentiate a successful student from one who is not?

Undergirding the conceptualization of success are the perceptions and beliefs of the stakeholders involved (Gardner, 2009). Many authors emphasize the importance of the meaning associated with achievement or success for achievement behavior (Salili & Mak, 1988). In fact, it is regarded as the determining factor of a person's decision whether to invest in a particular activity (Salili & Mak, 1988). This would mean that the difference in performance of high and low achievers in education is at least partly the result of a discrepancy in their definition of success. So, in order to come to a complete understanding of achievement behavior patterns and family strategies for educational success one needs to take a closer look at the subjective and affective meanings of success with the different stakeholders involved. Various groups of students, parents, school staff as well as broader society and educational researchers might define success in different ways (Sun, 2013). Moreover, values attached to success or its affective meaning may also vary among different socio-cultural groups or individuals and it may even mean different things at different stages in life (Salili & Mak, 1988). A study by Romney (2003), for example, showed that most of Asian-American students related school success to getting high scores and high income in the future, while black and Latino students tended to focus more on making a contribution to their communities and being happy (cited in Sun, 2013). Recently, the *Bet You!* Study argued that in Flanders educational success is generally being defined in fairly similar ways by teachers, school principals, and pupils and parents of different social and ethnic groups (Clycq, Timmerman, & Vandenbroucke, 2014). Regarding its day-to-day meaning there appears to be an overall strong emphasis on high grade point average, which is a variable commonly used worldwide to assess students' success in undergraduate education (Gardner, 2009). Especially parents are supportive of this definition of school success (Clycq, Nouwen, & Vandenbroucke, 2014). In addition, two other factors are brought to the fore that are typically

more qualitative measures of success: development of individual competences (mainly cited by teachers, which corresponds to official educational policy discourse in Flanders) and social skills or the skills to navigate between different social contexts (mainly cited by students).

Secondly, with regard to the future perspectives or the affective meaning of school success, the *Bet You!* Study found even more similarities amongst the different stakeholders. All appeared to believe in educational success as a central means to retain one's social position in society or to bring about upward social mobility. Success in education was regarded as prerequisite to finding a good job on the labor market, which in turn was seen as imperative for establishing a happy family life. This interconnection between school success, labor market opportunities and family life corresponds with the findings from other (inter)national studies on success goals (Clycq, 2009; Salili & Mak, 1988). In addition, two other specific patterns could be singled out with regard to the perceived consequents (Salili & Mak, 1988) of educational success, by which a distinction can be made between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for success (Clycq, Nouwen, & Vandenbroucke, 2014). Extrinsic motivations included financial success and social status. Intrinsic motivations on the other hand referred to the personal and social development of the individual, the exploration of interests and talents, and finding a job that matches those interests. It was found that both types of motivation were present with all respondents at least to some extent. The prevalence of extrinsic motivations, however, appeared higher with parents and students with a lower socioeconomic background.

In a pluralistic society as Flanders, schools not only bear responsibility in transmitting knowledge and skills with children, but also in promoting children's socioeconomic integration by stimulating their emotional, physical and moral development. So, in order to account for the dual role of schooling, known as qualification and socialization, it is necessary to go beyond quantitative performance indicators, such as attainment, test scores or graduation (Sun, 2013). Therefore, in this research, educational success is defined not only in terms of quantitative outcomes, but also in terms of youngsters' socioeducational integration experience in general (cf. Sun, 2013).

2. The model minority paradigm

2.1. Its origins and echo in Flanders

In many Western countries, particularly non-European, the Chinese have been referred to as a model minority. Generally the concept of 'the model minority' refers to an ethnic minority group whose members achieve a higher degree of success than other ethnic minorities within the same nation. This model minority paradigm is based on the aggregation of different success indicators, which not only include quantitative performance indicators but also stress the general and socioeducational integration of the minority in the country of residence. The term came to existence in the mid 1960s in the United States when mass print media featured the Chinese and Japanese immigrant communities as a success story based on their great economic mobility due to excellence in academics, regardless of socio-economic background (Chao, 1996; Li, 2001a; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Song & Wang, 2004). Trying to uphold the ideology of the American Dream, U.S. News proclaimed: "At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities – one such minority, the nation's 300,000 Chinese-Americans, is winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work" (McGowan & Lindgren, 2006, p. 333). Asians were praised for being "hard-working, uncomplaining role models of diligence and achievement" (Li, 2001a, p. 478), for valuing education, and for insisting that their children did well in school (McGowan & Lindgren, 2006). The latter authors also demonstrate how during the 1980s various American magazine articles focussed on the high participation rate of Asian Americans at college and their outstanding scores, by which they outperformed all other groups and even their White counterparts. As such, through the paradigm Asian-Americans were assigned a position in opposition to other minority groups, not in the least the black population, who was depicted as complaining too much about the alleged hardships they had to endure (McGowan & Lindgren, 2006). In many Western countries nowadays, the image of Asian immigrant students being the model minority is still quite alive (Clau-Layton, 2014; Yoon, 2012). Also in international literature the notion of 'model minority' is still being predominantly associated with South and East Asian immigrant groups – in particular the Chinese, Japanese and Korean, and to a lesser extent with Jews and Cuban youngsters.

2.2. Stated causes of success

The existing literature posits many possible causes of the Chinese model minority status and Chinese pupils' allegedly high aggregate level of educational achievement and socioeducational integration. A prevalent view that emerges in these accounts attributes causal primacy to ethnic culture, particularly the Confucian ethics and values that are strongly upheld and applied by Chinese immigrant families in the diaspora. Throughout the vast body of literature, the Chinese are generally regarded and portrayed as non-troublesome and conformist, and as being adherent to Confucian ethics such as familism, obedience and loyalty to authority, perseverance, etc. (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Another group of academics ascribes the success of Chinese students to the demands of acculturation and the discordant or positive relationship with the host society and its integration model. Or they consider the Chinese success story as a co-product of cultural values and the Chinese migrants' minority status (Li, 2001a). Others, such as Chang (2001) for example, argue that the Chinese can be successful due to their alleged apoliticality and not being as much a threat to the political establishment. Another explanatory factor that has been put forward is that the Asian immigrants represent a self-selected group of Asians with an already high social status in the country of origin, and thus with well enough resources, motivation and ability to make their migration a success. Many Asian-American immigrants indeed hold diplomas of higher education from their home countries and come from financially well-off families, which has partially been the result of the selective American immigration policy that especially attracts educationally and economically successful Asian professionals who can "contribute" to the American society (Takaki, 1993). In a similar sense, Crosnoe (2010) argues that socioeconomic disparities in the U.S. reflect "differential selectivity" in migration, as in Asia, it has mostly been higher socioeconomic status individuals who were prone to migration. However, this self-selective immigration hypothesis does not explain why a considerable number of Chinese immigrant children coming from families with lower SES-levels are also found to have significantly high academic performance and overall attainment (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

2.3. Pitfalls of the model minority paradigm

Although to some extent different scholars and Asian immigrants tend to subscribe the model minority idea, many others point to its potential damaging effects. They consider the entire paradigm as an act of stereotypical thinking and hence speak of a 'model minority myth'. In their article '*Testing the "Model minority myth",* McGowan and Lindgren (2006) describe what, according to the literature, might be so detrimental to the model minority model.

First of all, the model denies Asian immigrants the government attention that they need. One of the consequences of the myth is that those children with learning disabilities are often given less attention than actually necessary. Not all Asian migrants are 'rich and well-educated'. In fact, there are many differences between the different groups and between the different generations, by which the more recent arrivals often have a very different educational and socio-economical background than the first generations of migrants. However, simply because they are Asian they do not receive the attention and help they need. In the New York Times of 8 June 2008, Robert Taranahi is cited: "*Certainly there is a lot of Asians doing well, at the top of the curve, and that's a point of pride, but there are just as many struggling at the bottom of the curve"* (Lewin, 2008). Chao (1996) likewise asserts that such contentions as "the success story" gloss over the needs of Asian immigrants and the often-disproportionate investment and sacrifice from the family. It is thus wise not to lump all Asians or all Chinese together in one group of model immigrants.

Secondly, the model minority paradigm might also be used as a testimony that the American Dream, or the meritocratic ideal in general, is colour-blind and thus mask discriminatory practices on the basis of one's ethnic background. Yet, many students – also Asian – go through actual experiences of discrimination, a fact that is completely being dismissed by the model minority myth. According to Benton & Gomez (2014), parallel to general anti-minority sentiment, sinophobia is even on the rise in Western countries, such as Italy, France, Ireland and Russia. In recent years various Chinese diasporans have suffered violent attacks, which in most cases resulted from discontent with local communities because of the common perception that Chinese are taking over and dominating key economic sectors. The model minority paradigm also holds the very dangerous message that if one immigrant or ethnic group is able to succeed, the others should be as well. The myth carries the underlying

belief that (educational) success is only a matter of choice or control, and that those groups or individuals who fail, have only themselves to blame. Although the Belgian-Chinese are only rarely literally assigned the title of 'model minority', at times, also in Flanders an echo of the paradigm can be heard. In March 2015, Bart De Wever, chairman of the right-wing political party N-VA publicly praised the Chinese while discussing the growth of radicalization with Islamic communities in Belgium. Radicalization is not caused by mechanisms of racism in society, he stated, but is the result of specific problems with specific migrant groups. His words were as follows:

> "It [racism] is too easily invoked as an excuse for personal failure, especially by some groups, such as the Moroccan community, particularly the Berbers. Those are very closed communities with a distrust of the government. […] Our rejection comes from somewhere. If people still call themselves foreigners after four generations, than this has something to do with it. […] Racism is a relative notion, just like all other 'isms'. I have never met an Asian migrant who said to have been victim of racism. I also rarely see Asians appearing in the crime rates. […] We have massively admitted the wrong kind of immigrants to our country and thereupon we have not done enough to mitigate it."
> (Belga, 2015)

Following De Wever's statement, the prominent Flemish newspaper *De Morgen* published a reaction written by Yumi Ng, a 44-year old second-generation Chinese in Flanders, in which she puts De Wever at least partly in the right. Although she blames De Wever for not sufficiently condemning racism – she too has been a victim of discrimination – and for lumping all Berbers together, her words clearly betray the underlying belief that success in life is a matter of choice and that the choices made by the Chinese immigrants differentiate them from the Muslim minorities. I quote her at length:

> "I am also – typical of the determined Chinese! – allergic to the role of victim and to everything that leans towards self-pity. At the age of 8, I decided that nobody would make my life miserable. I decided to become the best, or at least to become better than my classmates who looked down on me. I decided that I would speak and write better Dutch than my classmates […]. I decided to prove that we, Chinese, can never be intimidated, that we are never an annoyance to the Belgians and that we always find the strength to realize our dreams. I made all of that come true. The same goes for my sisters, my brother and many Chinese people of my generation.

> […]
> Racism is reprehensible, unacceptable and must be addressed. Point. But can we also please simply admit that the Chinese are indeed much less affected by racism and that De Wever is thus also right? That the Chinese do not have a macho culture? That they are mainly engaged in hard work to buy a Mercedes? That they consider the separation of Church and State to be normal? That they do not call short-skirted girls names on the street? That they feel in honour bound not to be dependent on social security? And that it is exactly those things that allow the Chinese to easily find their way everywhere in the world and to be less confronted with discrimination?
> […]
> The Chinese respect the rules and the culture of the country in which they are living, also when they do not agree with certain aspects of that culture. *The Chinese blend in.* I thank my parents for the way they've raised me. They taught me to be proud of my Chinese origin and they taught me to integrate in Belgium. Mission accomplished.
> (Ng, 2015)

The above-mentioned article clearly gives away an embodiment of the model minority paradigm with Yumi Ng. Her opinion piece triggered a storm of reactions, wherein some were clearly negative though the majority full of praise for her courage 'to tell the truth'. Various critical scholars rightly fear that the model minority myth might be a possible creator of interracial tension. By constantly complementing the success of one minority group, the failure of the other group(s) is implicitly – or in this case, quite explicitly - pointed to, if not by the dominant society then possibly by the successful groups themselves when they embody the paradigm. When one minority is portrayed as intelligent, hard-working, persevering, studious, assimilating and without complaint (McGowan & Lindgren, 2006), then all other immigrant students become the opposite of that, i.e. ignorant, lazy, disruptive, unwilling to integrate, and complaining for no reason.

Other scholars also speak of potential emotional and psychological damaging effects with students belonging to the so-called model minority (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Qin, 2008). Many Asian students are confronted with an unfair burden, because not only the own community or family but also the broader society expects them to live up to the high expectations. As a result these youngsters often show high rates of stress and depression. It also encourages students to silence and hide their personal problems. This greater psychological stress can sometimes result in lower academic performance, even

of very talented members of the stereotyped group (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Moreover, according to Oyserman and Sakamoto (1997) the majority of Asian American students does not like to be referred to as a model minority, because this often entails a label of 'nerd', which is seen as another attempt to stereotype them as a minority group. Although positive stereotyping can provide a performance boost, it can also generate the opposite effect. Cheryan and Bodenhausen show that when expectations are held privately, then they are likely to provide a confidence boost, but when a positive performance is anticipated by an external audience, an individual may experience apprehension about meeting those high expectations (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Such findings can extent our current understanding of the role of ethnic identity issues in academic performance.

Another important remark of McGowan and Lindgren (2006) is that the model minority myth is two-faced. It presents the Asians as the well-assimilating minority, but at the same time if Asians become too 'model', then they become an unwelcome threat. In his article "*Chinese in the Labour Market of the Russian Far East: Past, Present, Future",* Shkurkin (2002) describes how in the 1990s the influx of Chinese immigrant was viewed quite timorously by the local population. The Chinese workers' discipline, tolerance of bad working conditions, assiduity, and capability to rapidly adapt to the peculiarities of entrepreneurship in Russia, led to the equivocal message in public media and discourse of "the silent penetration of the Chinese". McGowan and Lindgren write: "Every attractive trait matches up neatly to its repulsive complement, and the aspects are easily reversed" (2006, p. 343). This also holds that in the description of the Asian minority group, there is a persisting element of foreignness or exotism, by which their success is explained by foreign belief structures and values.

In sum, in various parts of the world Asian immigrants, including the Chinese, have been lauded for their successful integration into mainstream western society, and for that they have received the label of model minority. In Flanders, on the other hand, for a long time the Chinese diasporans mostly remained invisible throughout the migration debate. Recent comments and discussions in Flemish public media, however, reveal that the model minority paradigm likewise has its offshoots in Flemish society. At group-level, the Chinese in Belgium have indeed given prove of their ability to generate relatively rapid upward social mobility, not in the least through educational successes. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, the model minority paradigm carries with it some significant pitfalls. First of all, we must guard

not to lump all Chinese immigrants together. Instead attention should be paid to less prosperous trajectories with Chinese families as well. In addition, one should not take the meritocratic ideal for granted and turn a blind eye to Chinese immigrants' potential confrontation with discriminatory practices in mainstream Flemish society, including the labour market and education system. Furthermore, the paradigm's potential emotional effects should not be ignored, nor its inherent danger of creating inter-ethnical disparities within the broader society.

3. Determinants of school success and failure in minority youth

As previously indicated, throughout the vast bulge of literature a large variety of explanatory factors have been advanced to explain the successes of Asian immigrants, particularly in education. In the following sections these factors will be held up to the light of a more comprehensive theoretical framework on the determinants of school success or failure in minority youth.

3.1. Socio-economic status

Within socioeducational literature the socio-economic status (SES) of the family is often stated to be one of the most significant explanatory factors in school failure or success of children in general, and immigrant children in particular (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Clycq et al., 2014; Coleman, 1966; Hirtt et al., 2007; Hustinx & Meijnen, 2001; Levels, Kraaykamp, & Dronkers, 2008; Meijnen, Rupp, & Veld, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2006). In 2011, Agirdag et al. for example, found that within the Flemish education system, youngsters' socioeconomic background strongly influences their mathematics performance. Students from affluent families score significantly better on tests than students from disadvantaged backgrounds. According to the same authors, the ethnic origin of a pupil or the ethnic composition of the school's student population has no impact on mathematics peformance. Paradoxically, however, ethnic factors have clearly received much more attention in public discourse than socio-economic factors, see for example the problematization of the so-called 'concentration' schools (Agirdag et al., 2011). In most general terms SES is conceptualized as an individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure (Sun, 2013). It is usually measured as a combination of three

main elements that are said to affect children's educational attainment and aspirations: 1/ parents' education, 2/ parents' occupation, and 3/ family incomes. Some scholars also bring in the family's cultural patrimony (number of books in the house, study place, art work, access to internet, etc.) as an operational indicator (cf. Jacobs et al., 2009).

According to the theory of SES, poverty is a main cause of negative school outcomes. Contrary to what schools generally endeavour, education does not always lead to social equality. The socioeconomic status with which children enter the education system strongly predicts their future school trajectories and their social status upon leaving school. In Flanders, Hirtt et al. (2007) argue that since the massification of education after WOII, the mechanism of social selection and stratification in Western societies has shifted from out- to inside the educational system. Resulting from this phenomenon, children belonging to lower SES families are much more likely to experience an interrupted school career, to end up in the vocational track[2], to leave secondary school without qualifications, and to be absent from higher education (Pelleriaux, 2001). Hirtt et al. (2007) further contend that along with that of many other industrialised countries[3], the Flemish education system has become synonymous of class education by which general secondary schooling (ASO) or the A-stream constitutes the site of the rich while the vocational education (BSO) or the B-stream remains the major terrain of the poor. Likewise, Stevens and Vermeersch (2010) point to a prevalence of social class differentiation between streams in Flemish secondary education.

The different tracks in secondary education (general, technical, vocational) are commonly classified hierarchically. The vocational track is put at the lower end and is often perceived as the 'dustbin' of the Flemish educational system. Although on the current labour market there is a clear demand for skilled manual workers, teachers, parents and students alike generally associate vocational and technical education with a relative lower status (Stevens & Vermeersch, 2010). While the great majority of pupils enters first grade of secondary school in the A-stream, many among them, however, eventually end up in the B-stream (vocational education). This is particularly true for students belonging to lower social

[2] According to Hirtt et al. (2007) children of low-educated parents are 10 times more likely to end up in the vocational track by the 4th year of secondary education than pupils from higher socio-economic backgrounds.
[3] In the view of Hirtt and colleagues (2007) the mechanism of social predestination is not a peculiar Flemish phenomenon, but characteristic of all industrialized countries, including the Netherlands, France, Germany, the United States, and even Finland and Sweden. While Scandinavian countries are famous for their equalizing power, according to Hirtt and colleagues, the social selection eventually happens there as well, albeit later than in the other European countries, namely at the age of 16.

classes. Using data from qualitative interviews with Flemish secondary school teachers, Stevens and Vermeersch (2010) found that those pupils' 'descent' of the educational ladder is often attributed by teachers to a lack of ability, determination, school-related attitudes and behaviour or to pupils' specific social interaction styles that are believed to be more straightforward and not as much focused on self-control (Steven & Vermeersch, 2010). As such, teachers in lower status technical/vocational streams perceive their students as less teachable, which can have a strong influence on students' educational outcomes. Some studies even indicate that the reproduction of social inequality is not only ingrained in the Flemish education system, but that the system unintentionally contributes to an even higher social inequality rate (Groenez et al., 2009). In line with this school of thought, immigrant youngsters are then believed not to have a troubled school career because of their immigrant background, but because as immigrants they generally belong to lower social classes in society.

The premises of the above-stated authors largely accord with the social reproduction theory, which has been most elaborately discussed by Bourdieu & Passeron (1990). In general, the social reproduction theory points to different structural barriers and benefits as experienced in schools by children from different social classes. It also identifies a replication of existing social inequalities in society induced by underlying power mechanisms. In their explanatory model, Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) posit that the educational system tends to transmit and reward the cultural beliefs, values and behavioural dispositions of the dominant group in society, i.e. the white middleclass, thereby excluding children from lower socio-economic classes who grow up with different and less valued beliefs and dispositions. As a result of the power imbalance infused by the perceived or real discontinuity between home and school cultural capital, children from lower social classes are faced with many structural barriers for school success. Although class is the primordial category in Bourdieu's model, with specific reference to immigrant students, Levels (et al., 2008) similarly states that ethnic minority communities holding similar socioeconomic positions as the dominant group in society are less confronted with structural discrimination and exclusion and are hence given more opportunities for upward social mobility.

Various other studies, however, show that within the context of migration, the issue of SES and its relation to educational success is more complex that what the above-mentioned research suggests (Sun, 2013). SES cannot account for all existing intergroup differences in

educational achievement (Sue & Okazaki, 2009). Even among young people with similar socioeconomic backgrounds, significant differences are found between immigrant and native pupils as well as between distinct ethnic minority groups (Qian & Blair, 1999). A case in point is the way in which Chinese students across the diaspora are showing remarkable academic achievements despite the lower SES-levels of considerable numbers of them (Chow, 2004; Dronkers & Heus, 2010, Hirtt et al., 2007; McAndrew et al., 2009; Sun, 2013; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Oppositely, Ogbu (1990, 1994) found that at all class levels, African-American children in the United States performed significantly less well at group-level than their white counterparts. Crul (2000) adds that the socio-economic paradigm also cannot explain the differences within one and the same ethnic group. The parents of the successful Moroccan and Turkish pupils in his research were often very low educated. In fact, their SES did not differ significantly from that of the less successful students. Moreover, different studies assert that the impact of socioeconomic status is smaller for immigrant than native pupils (Duquet et al., 2006; Hermans, Opdenakker, & Van Damme, 2003; Hustinx & Meijnen, 2001; Van der Veen 2001). Van der Veen (2001) explains this by stating that immigrant youth can count more often on an intellectually stimulating home environment, which helps to mediate the overall influence of SES. Duquet and colleagues (2006) likewise referred to the role of cultural capital as an important mediator as well as to migrant parents' mobility orientation. Through stimulating their children to perform well in education, immigrant parents hope to reach a higher social status as a family.

3.2. Cultural deficit and meritocratic discourse

Bourdieu and Passeron's theory (1990) of social reproduction posits that the cultural capital of the dominant society is passed down and rewarded by the educational system. The ability of students to acquire such cultural capital and consequent access to academic rewards is largely subject to the cultural capital transmitted by the family (Dumais, 2002). The notion of cultural capital as an indicator of one's social status is an essential part of Bourdieu's theory and has been thoroughly examined by a vast amount of sociologists of education. According to Bourdieu, three forms of cultural capital can be distinguished: 1/ objectified cultural capital, which is often referred to as tangible household educational resources, such as reading provisions, computers, etc., 2/ institutionalized cultural capital, which refers to parents' educational credentials, and 3/ embodied cultural capital, or the disposition to

understand and appreciate cultural goods (Dumais, 2002; Sun, 2013). The latter form of cultural capital, namely the embodied cultural capital, is closely linked to another important concept of Bourdieu: *habitus*. For a good understanding of the notion of habitus, I make use of the description as given by Dumais (2002, p. 46):

> "Habitus is one's disposition, which influences the actions that one takes; it can even be manifested in one's physical demeanour, such as the way one carries oneself or walks. It is generated by one's place in the social structure; by internalizing the social structure and one's place in it, one comes to determine what is possible and what is not possible for one's life and develops aspirations and practices accordingly. This internalization takes places during early childhood and is a primarily unconscious process. […] On the basis of the class position they were born into, people develop ideas about their individual potential; for example, those in the working class tend to believe that they will remain in the working class. These beliefs are then externalized into actions that lead to the reproduction of the class structure."

According to the theory of Bourdieu, a student's habitus and embodied cultural capital are primarily transmitted through socialization in the family context and are very much influenced by a family's SES (Clycq, 2009; Dumais, 2002). Although Bourdieu leaves space for a certain amount of individual agency, students living in similar socio-economic conditions are believed to develop similar behavioural, perception and interpretation patterns (Wacquant, 1998). It is this cultural disparity between students from different social groups that is believed to generate differences in academic achievement. A variety of studies have nevertheless shown that even when controlling for SES, significant differences can still be observed among different minority groups regarding the correlation between cultural attitudes and behaviour on the one hand and educational achievement on the other hand (Driessen, 2001).

So, whereas Bourdieu and Passeron focussed on cultural differences according to social class, from the 1990s on, this disparity paradigm has equally been evoked by scholars to explain the educational disparity among ethnic minority groups in mainstream Western societies (Clycq, 2009; Driessen, 2001; Sue & Okazaki, 2009). This led to a 'cultural deficit paradigm', by which an inequality of cultures is assumed and by which migrant or minority pupils' failure to be successful in school is attributed to perceived cultural deprivation or lack of exposure to cultural capital – including norms, values, language - more congruent with

school success (Clycq et al., 2013, Opdenakker & Hermans, 2006). As a result, the deficit-centred model is strongly characterized by a problematization of minority students' home environment. It also holds the concomitant expectation towards immigrant children and parents to renounce their own culture and/or cultural identity by a total immersion into mainstream society (Roosens, 1995). Various authors have detected a strong influence of this 'cultural deficit or discontinuity model' in the discourses of Flemish educational actors (Clycq et al., 2013; Opdenakker & Hermans, 2006; Roosens, 1995). According to these authors and also shown by the recent *Bet You!* Research, the Flemish education system is strongly characterized by a mechanism of 'subtractive acculturation' (Opdenakker & Hermans, 2006; Roosens, 1995), a term similar to the notion of 'subtractive schooling', which is more commonly used in the United States (Valenzuela, 1999). Both terms refer to underlying negative views of perceived or real discrepancy between pupils' home and school culture and to the belief that in order to enjoy equal opportunities in society, immigrant or minority pupils must become like their native counterparts in all respects (Roosens, 1995).

Withal typical of the cultural deprivation paradigm is also the general idea that the (supposedly) meritocratic educational system itself is unbiased and neutral and thus not to blame for the existing social inequality in education. It holds up the liberal belief that individuals or subgroups are responsible for their own success or failure and ignores the role of the school context or education system (Clycq et al., 2014; Nicaise, 2008), including the impact of education policies, curricula content, teaching methods or teacher's perceptions and expectations. Yet, there clearly exists a 'Golem' effect in Flemish education (Agirdag, Van Avermaet & Van Houtte, 2012). This implies that due to systematic underestimation by teachers of the learning capacities and skills of students from lower socioeconomic or immigrant backgrounds, those students are offered less learning opportunities and support, which upkeeps or even increases their educational arrears. A corollary of the Golem effect is the Pygmalion or Rosenthal effect whereby higher expectations by teachers lead to an increase in performance with students. Furthermore, different scholars have shown that the meritocratic discourse is often being internalized and even legitimized by individuals with a minority background, which is, for instance, reflected in the so-called 'black flight' of immigrant parents who do not want their children to study at schools with too many migrant youngsters (Clycq et al., 2014; Nouwen & Vandenbroucke, 2012). According to Clycq (et al., 2014) it is through this entanglement of two, at first sight conflicting, notions of meritocracy (considering individual merit) and deficit thinking (which relates to socio-ethnic group

membership), that structural inequalities within the educational system are ignored. He goes on to state that with respect to ethnicity and culture, it are only the minorities who are ethnicized or culturalized while the cultural or ethnic bias inherent in the educational system remains implicit and unproblematized.

3.3. Language proficiency

In line with the emphasis on the effect of immigrant pupils' cultural capital on educational attainment, a lot of attention is paid in Flemish education to the role of language. Present day Flemish society and schools have become realms that *de facto* are characterised by multilingualism. Increasingly schools have to deal with a large influx of pupils with multiple and distinct linguistic backgrounds. Thereby, immigrant pupils' Dutch language proficiency is generally regarded as being positively correlated with academic achievement. Crul (2000) for example, found that successful Moroccan and Turkish pupils in the Netherlands had a good active and passive command of the Dutch language, even though it was not their mother tongue. Jacobs and colleagues (2009), whom for their analysis relied on the PISA-results of 2006, also observed a significant impact of home language on immigrant youngster's school attainment. Although their data reveals that even when immigrant youngsters speak Dutch at home, they still lack behind on test scores, the authors nevertheless put forward home language as an important explanatory factor. Generally, scholars, policy makers and Flemish school staff believe that discrepancies between pupils' home and school language are at the source - along with other cultural aspects - of the prevailing education gap between immigrant and native students. It is assumed that children who speak another language than Dutch at home are confronted with a 'language deficiency' and therefore fall behind in school (Crul, 2000; Duquet et al., 2006; Hermans, 1995; Heyerick, 2008). In other words, pupils' distinct home languages are believed to impede the acquisition of the school language, which is Dutch. As a result, Flemish policy makers have clearly chosen to prioritize the teaching of Dutch to non-native speakers.

In Flanders, respect for other languages and dealing with multilingualism in the school context has degenerated into a large ideological debate, by which enduring attention for one's own language is regarded upon as a matter of choice or agency and, more important, as unwillingness to integrate and lack of parental involvement and responsibility with regard to

children's socioeducational integration (Jalhay & Clycq, 2014). Based on his comparative analysis of successful second generation Turkish and Moroccan students in the Netherlands, Crul (2000) likewise argued that the difference in Dutch language development between successful and less successful immigrant students is the result of different attitudes and behaviours within the family that (in)directly influence children's exposure to the Dutch language and hence also children's school readiness and further attainment. The theorem of Hirtt et al. (2007) is that the language policy as it currently exists in the education system clearly exudes an assimilationist stance. They speak of 'the ethnocentric reflex', which according to the authors, is completely at odds with contemporary internationalisation and interculturalisation trends. Similar opinions are found with Joppke (2007) and Jacobs and Rea (2007) who state that from the new millennium on, as a result of new civic integration programmes in Europe and the shift towards responsibility of the migrant, old and new migrants are being forced to dispose of the values and living habits of the country of origin, as well as of their native language for the sake of integration. Within this context the political will to organize or support bicultural education is very limited. The fact that in 2011, the then Flemish Minister of Education, Pascal Smet, closed down six projects of multilingual education in Brussels despite their long existence and positive outcomes, is illustrative for that stance (Leman, 2012).

Language is the symbolic embodiment of culture (Bourdieu, 1991) and therefore plays an important role in the establishment or maintenance of a specific (ethnic) identity. Various authors argued that the rejection of immigrant pupils' home culture could thus have dramatic consequences for immigrant pupils' identity development, self-esteem and educational attainment (Clycq, 2009; Hermans, 1995; Heyerick, 2008; Roosens, 1998; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). Portes & Fernandez-Kelly (2006, p. 19) state, "it is not necessary to reject one's own culture and history to do well in school. On the contrary, such roots can provide the necessary point of reference to strengthen the children's self esteem and aspirations for the future". Similarly, Costigan et al. (Costigan, Hua, & Su, 2010) assert that various qualitative as well as quantitative studies of immigrant youth in Canada demonstrate that immigrant pupils who are securely embedded in their ethnic culture are academically the most successful, whereas those who feel disfranchised from their ethnic background run a much higher risk of falling behind in school. This link between ethnic identity and academic success appeared particularly strong amongst second-generation youngsters and – important for this study - was also very apparent with Chinese Canadian youth.

Heyerick (2008), in turn, reflected that teachers' problematization of difference in linguistic and cultural background leads to decreased expectations from teachers toward their immigrant pupils and to obvious or unarticulated forms of racism. From this perspective, schools that exclude the culture and language of its immigrant pupils rather perpetuate the education gap instead of resolving it. On the 7th of January 2013 anthropologist Johan Leman raised the question in the Flemish journal *De Standaard* which of the two parties was right: those who state that integration precedes language acquisition or those that depart from the belief that Dutch proficiency precedes integration. In very general terms, one could argue that Flanders appears to be afflicted by a general discord between these two paradigms.

3.4. Parental involvement

Concomitant to the scholarly attention for social reproduction, cultural capital, habitus, and language in the last few decades a large number of studies have drawn attention to the specific involvement of parents in the schooling of children and the impact of home culture, in particular with minority and/or lower income communities. A vast amount of books, journal articles, and stand-alone reports are based on the general recognition that parental involvement and good partnerships between schools and families positively impact on children's learning and well-being and thus on student achievement (Clycq et al., 2014; Epstein, 2011; Hornby, 2011; Lavenda, 2011; Li, 2001a; Menheere & Hooge, 2010; Phillipson, 2009; Samaey, Van den Branden, & Verhelst, 2006; Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Brus, 2007). According to Verhoeven (et al., 2003) there are different motivations underpinning the stated importance of parental involvement. First of all, in line with the social reproduction theory and the cultural (dis)continuity paradigm it is believed that parent involvement is necessary to reach congruence between a pupil's home and school context. Through parent involvement schools and parents can learn from each other about the needs of the child and where necessary adapt their practices. Secondly, parents and schools should be equal partners in the education of the child as this leads to better development opportunities for the child. Differences between the expectations of the school and the family may cause difficulties, confusion and anxiety for children and should thus be avoided by establishing and maintaining positive home-school relationships (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Resulting from this theoretical evidence, most western educational policy makers and schools have prioritized to

involve parents more closely in pupils' education process (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Pels, Distelbrink, & Postma, 2009).

Parental involvement, however, remains a very complex as well as dynamic concept enclosing multiple dimensions, layers, and expressions. It is not a neutral concept as it is always subject to perceptions, expectations and power mechanisms within and between families, schools and broader society. From their research on parental involvement in Flemish secondary education in Brussels, Morreel, Van Avermaet & Vanderlinde (2012) conclude that to a large extent the definition of parental involvement or what it means to be a 'good parent' is a social construct and thus context-dependent. In line with Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) they argue that education policy and schools, on the one hand, represent specific 'fields' that are characterized by a specific language and rules of play. These fields are grounded in a specific set of values and norms and are embedded in a broader context. Parents, in turn, equally endorse certain values and norms as well as beliefs about human development and appropriate ways to educate children and these too are context-dependent. According to Morreel (et al., 2012) the relationship between families and schools can thus never be neutral, but is in contrast always dependent on the extent to which both 'fields' consider one other's values, norms and behavioural practices to be congruent or legitimate. It is generally believed that the larger the perceived congruence, the greater the chances for children to educational success.

3.4.1. The cultural these

With some authors the explanatory power of SES and social reproduction chiefly stems from the link they make between socioeconomic position and children's deprivation of the right parental involvement in education (Canadian Council of Learning, 2009; Van der Veen, 2001). Likewise, in Flanders, much of the literature and debates have focused on the home culture and parental involvement of the more problematized immigrant groups such as the Turks and Moroccans. It is argued that parents who belong to these (and other) minority groups are deprived of the necessary human and cultural capital, and often also willingness, in order to assist and incite their children to perform well in school. They therefore demand higher levels of self-reliance and autonomy with their offspring (Canadian Council of Learning, 2009; Duquet et al., 2006; Lareau & Horvat-McNamara, 1999; Li, 2006a, 2006b;

Louie, 2001; Van der Veen, 2001). Such deficit thinking can have significant impact on the relationship between immigrant families and schools. Using ethnographic interviews with Moroccan parents, the study of Hermans (2006) revealed that as a result of the dominant discourse in schools and broader Flemish society by which Moroccan parental involvement and upbringing are generally framed in terms of deficit and a refusal to integrate into society, these parents re-assert their moral responsibility by depicting Western schools and society as immoral and racist while portraying themselves as first-class educators. Such reciprocal stereotyping is not conducive to the educational success of Moroccan youngsters as the educational strategies of their parents are overshadowed by fundamental feelings of distrust and alienation (Hermans, 2006). On the other hand, with respect to Asian immigrant parents, the societal and scholarly discourse appears to be located at the complete other end of the spectrum, by which the nature of parents' involvement and the specific cultural characteristics as embodied cultural capital are invoked as major explanatory factors, not for the failure but for the education success of their children.

3.4.2. Chinese parental involvement

The paramount idea is that Asian immigrants' socioeducational success is the result of cultural values and socialization processes within the family that strongly emphasize academic accomplishment and upward social mobility (Sue & Okazaki, 2009; Qin, Li & Han, 2011). Crosnoe (2010), for example, writes that even though Asian immigrant parents may engage less in visible involvement behaviours in the school, for example by participating in parent-teacher associations, they are nonetheless very much involved in their children's education at home by setting high academic standards and marshalling the necessary resources for their children to meet those standards. Throughout the literature the paramount emphasis is put on Confucian ethic and collectivist principles that are stated to remain strong within the Chinese immigrant family (Lau-Clayton, 2014). It is believed that those significantly affect Chinese parenting styles, parent-child relationships and childhood experiences (Dronkers & Heus, 2010; Lau-Clayton, 2014; Li 2001a; Lu, 2013; Sun, 2014; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Through the transmission of Confucian principles, a specific habitus and consequent behavioural patterns are installed with Chinese immigrant children that positively affect their socio-educational integration (Cohen, 1997; Dronkers & Heus, 2010; Lau-Clayton, 2014). Moreover, as shown by Lau-Clayton (2014) it is often being suggested that

the migration process itself entrenches traditional regimes further because Chinese parents attempt to maintain their cultural or ethnic practices overseas as a result of their encounter with a 'culture shock' in the host country.

One of the most cited Confucian principles in academic literature is the virtue of filial piety, or the duty of a child to obey and to be subservient to parents as well as to appreciate social hierarchy and authority, including elders and teachers (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Within Confucian thought it is believed that learned behaviours within the home context extend into the social domain and thus lead Chinese parents and students to do well in broader society (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Likewise, scholars assert that the concept of filial piety is pervasive across the school environment and other social contexts, also in the context of diaspora (Francis & Archer, 2005; Lau-Clayton, 2014). Other often-cited Confucian principles in existing literature are the following: high demands and expectations for achievement and upward social mobility, induction of guilt about parental sacrifices, a general pursuit of knowledge and education, social comparisons with other Asian-American families in terms of educational success and the concept of *face*, work ethic, patience, diligence and perseverance (Cohen, 1997; Dronkers & Heus, 2010; Lau-Clayton, 2014; Sue & Okazaki, 2009).

With regard to parenting styles, the majority of studies depict Chinese immigrant parents to be authoritarian in contrast to Western parents who are mostly reported to make use of the authoritative parenting style (Chen, Chen & Zheng, 2012; Lau-Clayton, 2014). According to Baumrind's typology of parenting (1971) the dimensions of authoritarian parenting include high levels of parental control and the requirement of absolute child obedience, reflecting high levels of demandingness on the child and low levels of responsiveness to the child's needs. Authoritative parenting, on the other hand, emphasizes democratic participation and reasoning, reflecting high levels of both responsiveness and demandingness (Chen et al., 2012). While authoritative parenting is found to be most conducive to academic success among Western youngsters, authoritarian parenting is primarily associated with successful school trajectories among Chinese and other Asian immigrants (Chen et al., 2012). Yet other studies have revealed both authoritative and authoritarian styles amongst Chinese immigrant families (Chao, 1994; Lau-Clayton, 2014). In fact, according to Chao (1994), Baumrind's typology of parenting styles reflects an ethnocentric stance because it does not take into account an 'emic' lens to understand Chinese immigrant parents' own interpretations of their parenting style and practices (Chen et al., 2012, Lau-Clayton, 2014). She found that high

levels of parental control and restrictiveness with Chinese parents actually stemmed from an intense love and concern for the child (Chao, 1994). Her research shows the importance of the concept of *guan,* which means 'to govern' as well as 'to love'. Therefore, the Western-based dichotomy between authoritative or authoritarian parenting does not capture the variation of parenting within Chinese immigrant families (Lau-Clayton, 2014).

3.4.3. The cultural these contested

Whereas existing studies are still heavily reliant on cultural explanations for understanding parental involvement and childrearing strategies among Chinese immigrant families, some scholars, however, question the use of culture as the sole explanation for patterns of behaviour and family strategies (Lau-Clayton, 2014; Sue & Okazaki, 2009). Sue and Okazaki (2009), for example, argue that much of the statements about the impact of culture are based on anecdotal evidence rather than on empirical findings. In the same vein, others argue that attributing Chinese immigrants' educational success merely to ethnic culture is problematic as the transition of distinct cultural elements to the second and subsequent generations of Chinese children is not just a given matter of course (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008). For example, many immigrant children do no longer speak the language of their parents or adhere to their parents' religion or beliefs (Lu, 2013). Some sources also suggest that the disparity between Confucian values (focusing on social order and harmony of the family and society, self-control and compliance) and Western values (focused on individuality, critical thinking and creativity) can also reduce socioeducational integration of both Chinese parents and children (Lau-Clayton, 2014). For example, cultural misunderstandings or disagreements can cause parent-child conflicts, especially when children identify more with the culture of the host country whilst parents attempt to hold on to the values of the country of origin (Lau-Clayton, 2014).

In addition, previous research has shown that the Chinese immigrants' ideologies about childrearing may be modified or become less influential due to the process of acculturation. The recent study of Lau-Clayton (2014) on contemporary British-Chinese parenting demonstrates that although the importance of Chinese traditions and values are still evident amongst contemporary Chinese immigrant family life, parents also draw upon Western cultural elements to teach and guide their children. She argues that cultural identities are non-

fixed entities, which are situational and relational, and that this is clearly reflected in the parenting choices and practices of Chinese immigrant parents in Britain. As such, one should not neglect other areas that can influence parenting decisions, such as contextual and structural features in larger society as well as individual differences and the role of children themselves (Lau-Clayton, 2014; Sue & Okazaki, 2009). Likewise, Sue and Okazaki (2009) do not invalidate a cultural explanation for disparities in educational achievement between groups but state that one should not ignore important societal and contextual factors, as cultural values do not operate in a vacuum. Moreover, in contrast to the bulk of studies which view Chinese people as a homogeneous group, one should also account for the diversity within the Chinese diaspora in terms of place of origin, migration history, SES, etc. (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Lau-Clayton (2014) warns against seeing Chinese people as "cultural dupes" who are connected in an absolute sense to their 'static' cultural values and norms. Cultural identities are porous in nature; they are fluid and malleable to change. In sum, a more holistic understanding of Chinese family life and strategies for education is needed, especially when the theories surrounding diaspora and Chineseness are utilized, as will be discussed later on in this chapter.

3.4.4. Family (adaptive) strategies

Central to the dissertation's research question is the construct of 'family strategies'. Immigrant families often make use of a collection of such (adaptive) strategies view of general success. For a good understanding of the concept I largely draw on the theoretical underpinnings of Moen & Wethingthon (1992). They show that family strategies can imply short-term planning for tomorrow, long-term planning for the next generation and everything in-between. The concept of 'family (adaptive) strategy' has often been employed by social scientists as a useful bridge between a structural approach and a rational choice approach. Moen and Wethington explain that whereas the former focuses on households submissively deploying strategies as an effect of larger socio-structural forces, the latter invokes the families as active decision-making units who choose between varieties of behavioural patterns in the face of structural barriers and opportunities.

An important conceptual issue is the delineation of what family decisions and behaviour fit under the wide-ranging concept of family strategies. Tilly (1979) defined family strategies

as “a set of implicit rules guiding the behaviour of family members, families, and households. These strategies have two functions: the first, a means of familial rational calculation to make economic and social decisions that affect the family as a whole; the second, an application of pre-existent perceptions and practices in dealing with everyday life” (in Moen & Wethington, 1992:235). As such family strategies are guided by external exigencies as well as cultural values that have their origin both in family history and ethnic origin. This dissertation focuses on those strategies developed, used and adapted by the Chinese families in Flanders that centre on education.

Moen and Wethington (1992) highlight the temporal nature of family strategies. They argue that changes in the broader economic, social and institutional environment can bring forth transformations in family resources, needs and aspirations and that family strategies are designed and negotiated in order to reduce the disparity between the two. In their article the authors also focus on various methodological and conceptual issues that I would also like to take into account. First of all they point to different levels of analysis in the investigation of family strategies. Social scientist have often studied them on the collective level thereby documenting collective trends and outcomes, but did little to analyse and explain the decision-making choices of ordinary families, or the mechanisms producing change in strategies over time. As an anthropologist I will obviously focus on the latter. Secondly they point out that it is not the families but the individuals within the families that make the actual decisions. Yet family strategies not merely represent the sum of decisions of the individual family members, they also reflect agreements and disagreement amongst the members. After all power relations, often marked by age, gender and social position of family members outside the household shape the decision-making process.

3.4.5. Operationalization of parental involvement and strategies

Despite the strong focus on parental involvement, throughout the literature the concept is often conceived and applied in very broad ways by which its exact meaning and operationalization remain veiled (Ho & Kwong, 2013; Menheere & Hooge, 2010; Verhoeven et al. 2003). In the broadest sense the notion of parental involvement refers to a wide variety of actions that parents take for the benefit of their child’s success at school (Lavenda, 2011). In more concrete terms such actions can vary from the transmission of certain values and

norm through socialization, modelling desired behaviour, communicating with the child on school-related topics, helping with homework, active home-tutoring, setting high expectations, arranging for appropriate study time and space, a conscious involvement in the wellbeing of children in school, over attendance at teacher-parent meetings to formal participation in the school's policies (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Lavenda 2011; Smit et al., 2007). In educational literature, a number of models and typologies have been developed to describe and analyse the cooperation and involvement between parents and schools (Morreel et al., 2012). They make a distinction between different levels and types of involvement. For the operationalization and analysis of parental involvement, in this study I will appeal to some to some of them.

In her comprehensive work on school, family and community partnerships, Epstein (2011) has identified six types of parental involvement, ranging from more proximal to more distal types (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009) with all of them having varying effects on children's educational outcomes. They are: parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, decision-making and collaboration with the community. Each type can be related to one of the systems in Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological framework (1979, 1986). This framework constitutes the underlying epistemology of this research and will be described in more detail in chapter five. Parenting and learning at home are part of the family microsystem. The three subsequent types are related to the mesosystem which constitutes the point of intersection between the family and school microsystems. The sixth type, 'collaboration with the community', adds the broader exosystem to the former microsystems and their interconnections (mesosystems).

The first type, '*parenting*', implies parents' basic responsibility for the nurturing and childrearing process. It is about the ways in which parents prepare their children for school through the establishment of a pedagogic climate at home that supports the children in their learning process. It includes mechanisms of supervision, discipline, guidance, communication, expectations and emotional support (Baumrind, 1971; Verhoeven et al., 2003). According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) good parenthood at home is the most important factor in parental involvement. They believe it also involves setting a good example, carrying out the importance of education and fostering high expectations vis-à-vis children's educational careers (Menheere & Hooge, 2010). The second dimension of parent involvement consists of the actual '*communication*' between schools and parents on school

activities and on the progress the child is making. This can take place in formal or informal ways (Verhoeven et al., 2003). The third type of parental involvement is called '*volunteering*' and refers to the parents' willingness to volunteer in school's activities, for example by helping teachers in the class room or by assisting school staff on excursions. Next Epstein speaks of '*learning at home'*. Here she points to the ways in which parents support their children in their schoolwork at home and offer direct help. It is about curriculum-related activities and decisions. Type five consists of parents' *formal participation in school boards and commissions*. The last type is about the parents' *collaboration with the broader community* of which they themselves and the schools are a part.

As Epstein's framework was mainly set up as a tool to assist educators in developing partnership programs between schools and families, and not as an analytical tool to interpret parental involvement from an emic perspective, for the purpose of allegiance to the research data it will be necessary to adapt the different types of parental involvement to become broader categories. As such her typology will also be interlinked with other theories that focus more closely on the context-dependency of parent involvement.

In their studies of elements affecting the nature and scope of parental involvement, international scholars have identified different domains of influential factors. In his book *Parental involvement in Childhood Education*, Garry Hornby (2011) has presented a model, which he developed to clarify potential barriers to effective parental involvement. He thereby distinguished four significant domains: individual parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors and societal factors. First, individual parent and family factors focus on parents' beliefs about education and parental involvement, parents' current life contexts, perceptions of invitations for parental involvement, class, ethnicity and gender. According to empirical evidence by different scholars, SES, ethnicity and family structure appear to be particularly significant, as well as the cultural and social capital of the family (Ho & Kwong, 2013; Lavenda, 2011; Phillipson, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). To this first domain, I would like to add parents' past educational experiences. The second domain in Hornby's model, the parent-teacher factors, addresses differing agendas, attitudes and languages used. This domain largely coincides with that of Verhoeven and colleagues (2003) on 'contextual factors', which according to them, includes the parents' general perception of the school climate (inviting versus excluding), practical barriers (e.g. lack of requisite language skills, demanding work schedules, distance home-school) and institutional barriers (e.g. absence of translators at

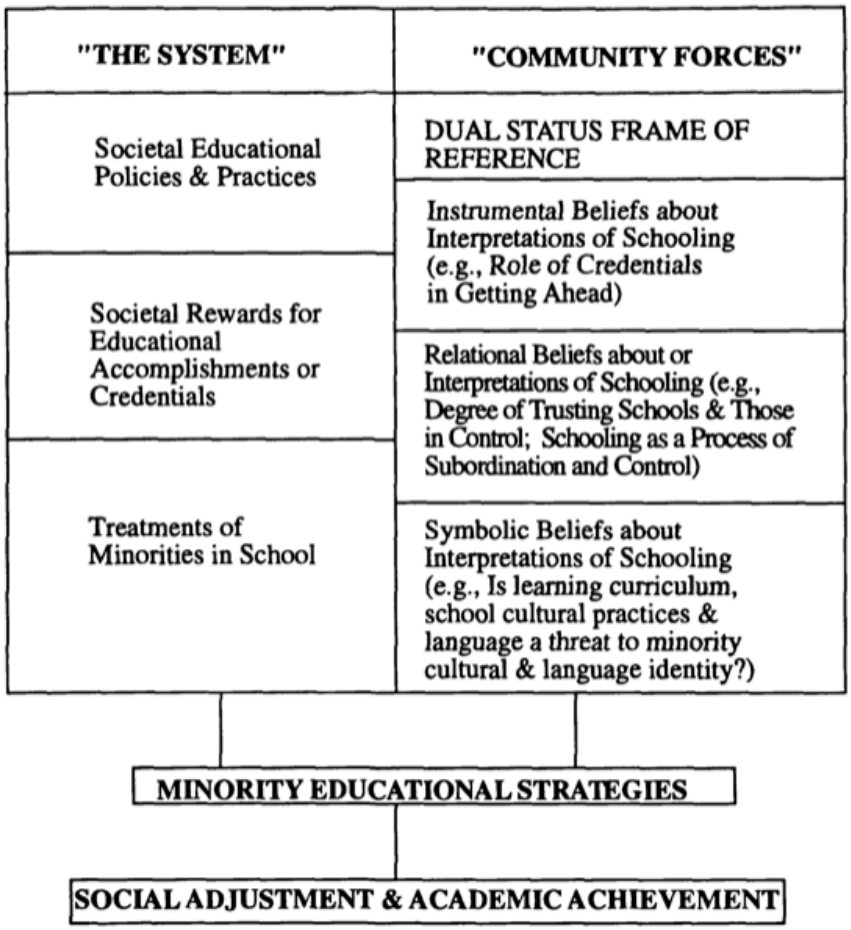
school). In third instance, Hornby (2011) discusses child characteristics, including age, learning (dis)abilities, gifts and talents and behavioural problems. Finally, the societal factors refer to historical, demographic, political and economic issues. Elements belonging to one domain undeniably affected or relate to those of others domains. Therefore in the forthcoming analysis of parental involvement, the four realms will often be considered intertwined.

To a large extent Hornby's domains of influential factors relate to the distinction made by Samaey (et al., 2006) and Boerave & Van Rijn (2010) between seven dimensions of parental involvement. These are: the 1/ knowledge, 2/ emotional, 3/ rational, 4/ beliefs, 5/ competences, 6/ behaviour, and 7/ time dimension. The *knowledge dimension* is about the content and the amount of knowledge parents have of education statutory regulations, parents' familiarity with the general education system and its institutions, with the way the school operates, the curriculum, and school and class life, etc. It is also about their knowledge and use of different channels to gather information on the above-stated elements as well as on their child's performance and wellbeing at school. Equally important is the *emotional dimension* of parental involvement. Do parents feel welcome at school or rather excluded? Do they have a lot of contact with school staff and how do they experience those encounters? In addition to parents' general perception of the school climate, the emotional dimension also includes the degree of openness on the side of the parents themselves. Are they willing to participate in school's activities or do they keep rather aloof? The *rational dimension*, in turn, focuses on the rational considerations that parents make – based on a cost-benefit analysis – and that underpin their actions. The *belief* dimension refers to the phenomena of self-efficacy and parental role construction. Self-efficacy denotes the belief of parents in their capacity to contribute to their child's school attainment (Lavenda, 2011). Parental role construction on the other hand refers to the extent to which parents feel they need to take responsibility for their child's academic success and to what extent they perceive this as a shared obligation in collaboration with the school (Lavenda, 2011; Smit et al., 2006). The fifth dimension of parent involvement, according to Samaey's et al. framework, is related to *competences* of parents. Independent of their wishes and intentions, are they able to understand the information they receive from schools; are they capable of helping their children with school tasks? Do they dare to express their opinions vis-à-vis school staff even if those are not consistent with what is customary? The *behavioural* dimension then looks at what parents actually do, while the *time dimension* - it speaks for itself - includes the time spent by parents

on the involvement. How (often) do parents create a stimulating and controlling environment in order to support their children's learning at school?

3.5. Cultural-ecological theory of minority school performance

In the US, John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory of minority children's school performance has received a great deal of attention. To explain the differences in school performance among minority groups, Ogbu has focused on the histories and sociocultural adaptations of such groups (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). His theory considers two main sets of factors: 'the system' and 'community forces'. 'The system' refers to the ways minorities are treated in the education system in terms of policies and practices and societal rewards for investment in education. This includes the following particular points of interest: school segregation, staffing of schools, tracking, teacher expectations, student-teacher interactions, and the extent to which educational credentials can be rendered into security of employment and wages (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). As the second factor, the 'Community forces' are about the minorities' perceptions of schooling and the ways they respond to education as a result of the former treatment.



Source: Ogbu & Simons (1998)

As such, according to Ogbu, the relationship between an ethnic minority group and the dominant group in a society has significant implications for the minority's school performance. From his point of view, not only do structural barriers or discrimination play an important role, but even more so the difference in community forces (Hermans, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

In the development of his theory, Ogbu made use of a classification of minority groups, by which he distinguished between voluntary and involuntary minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Involuntary minorities are the ones that have been conquered, enslaved, or colonized, and have thus become part of the dominant group against their will. Voluntary (immigrant) communities are those people who have willingly moved to the country of residence in search of better opportunities in whatever sense. Characteristic of this second group is that they usually experience difficulties at school due to linguistic and cultural differences and discriminatory practices within the educational system, but that they do not perceive those

problems as long lasting or unbridgeable. For Ogbu, the Chinese in the United States are an example of a voluntary minority group. Sun (2013) has claimed the same with regard to the Chinese community in Quebec. This is not to say that a minority group's status is determined by ethnicity. According to Ogbu, it is the groups' history in a particular country rather than ethnicity that defines the categorization. "Chinese Americans are voluntary minorities because of the ways and reasons they came to the United States, not because of their Chinese ethnicity" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 167). Important for this research is also that, according to Ogbu, the children of immigrant minorities should be likewise considered as voluntary because with them the same community forces prove effective.

The community forces that Ogbu talks about are considered to form part of a particular frame of reference that appears dominant according to the minority's status or category. According to the cultural-ecological theory voluntary minorities have a positive dual frame of reference (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). For them the comparison of the situation in the country of residence with that of back home is a positive one. Although voluntary migrants are confronted with discrimination and structural barriers, they generally consider this situation temporary and believe that their offspring will be able to surpass the difficulties encountered by the first (and/or second) generation. They strongly believe in the emancipatory power of education and as such procure strong motivational grounds for their children to study well. Their role models are those who have attained educational and professional success through a conventional mobility pattern, i.e. by accommodating to the dominant society and following the rules of working hard and getting good grades. Involuntary migrants on the other hand do not see education as a major route to success. For generations long their community has been struggling to overcome structural barriers, often with little success. As such, their overall trust in the dominant educational institutions is rather limited.

4. Ethnic-cultural identification

4.1. There must be two of something to create a difference.

Recently, Yoon (2012) pointed to the necessity to analyse immigrant families' educational experiences through the lens of ethnic identity and positioning. The notion of 'ethnicity' became central in anthropology and other social sciences in the late 1960s (Eriksen, 1999,

2001; Guibernau & Rex, 1999). Following the decolonization processes in Africa and Asia and the concomitant anticolonial and antiracist thoughts, the term was initially used to endorse the positive feelings of belonging to a specific cultural group (Guibernau & Rex, 1999). However, since the collapse of communism in Western Europe at the end of the twentieth century and as a result of the growing influx of immigrants coming from the former colonies and elsewhere, in everyday discourse the term has increasingly received a negative ring of armed conflict between corporate groups fighting over territory (e.g. Bosnia; Russia, Tibet, etc.) or of the institutional and day-to-day issues between immigrant groups and the cultural majority in a country (Eriksen, 1999, 2001; Guibernau & Rex, 1999).

Ethnicity in itself is a complex phenomenon. Many have made attempts at a comprehensive definition, all trying to answer the question which elements constitute an ethnic group. In the anthropology of ethnicity a distinction is made between primordial and situational ethnicity (Guibernau & Rex, 1999; Pang, 2003b). Primordial ethnicity suggests a given and inexplicable form of bonding between members of a group based upon a real or fictitious unity of descent (*jus sanguinis*), a narrative or myth that endorses this common origin, an 'objective' similarity of cultural and linguistic characteristics/customs, and often also an attachment to a clearly demarcated territory (Guibernau & Rex, 1999; Weber, 1999). According to Weber (1999), all those elements may survive in the consciousness of people even after the political institutions that represent them have disappeared, which is for example the case when people migrate. Such a definition of ethnic groups largely coincides with a common assumption that race, ethnicity, culture and language are almost synonymous to one another and that the boundary between ethnic communities is a 'natural' boundary. In fact, primordial ethnicity suggests that each ethnic community has developed its own culture and society in relative seclusion, corresponding to the local ecological context. This view has created a world of separate and clearly demarcated ethnic groups, each with its own culture.

The second paradigm of situational ethnicity, mostly known through Frederik Barth (1969), is in fact more valuable as it also turns the attention to social processes in the study of ethnicity. Despite of what is still commonly held in popular discourse, there is no one-to-one relationship between race, ethnicity and culture, nor do ethnic groups and identities develop in geographical or social isolation (Barth, 1969). Eriksen compares the idea of an isolated ethnic group with the sound from one hand clapping – an absurdity (1999, 2001). He demonstrates that the importance and self-consciousness of ethnic identity often becomes more important in

cases where groups share many cultural elements and have regular contact. He succinctly writes: "The more similar people become, it seems, the more they are concerned with remaining distinctive" (Eriksen, 2001, p. 262). Although Barth does not deny the association between distinct cultural characteristics and ethnic categories, he does point out that ethnicity is not determined by so-called specific and invariable cultural elements. As such he replaces the traditional emphasis on culture with a focus on interaction and social boundaries. He writes:

> "The [cultural] features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant. Not only do ecological variations mark and exaggerate differences; some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied" (Barth, 1969, p. 14).

Barth's perspective on ethnicity is an instrumental one, whereby ethnicity is seen as dynamic and negotiable (Christiansen, 1998; Eriksen, 2001). Ethnic identity is constructed on the basis of boundaries or opposition to other groups and therefore implies a dynamic and on-going interplay of processes of self-ascription and other-ascription (Barth, 1969; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Throughout this process of interethnic differentiation a wide range of criteria can be deployed as markers of cultural difference: phenotype, language, attire, religion, economic activities, and certain values (Eriksen, 2001; Jenkins, 2008). For an ethnic identity to be recognized and maintained, these distinct cultural markers should be embedded in the group's social practices, e.g. in ethnic organisations (Eriksen, 2001). In the same vein, Yoon (2012) argues against essentialist and fixed views of ethnic identity. According to her, (ethnic) identity is always a social construct, or a social mediated process and in that sense 'identity' and 'positioning' are interrelated concepts. She distinguishes between two kinds of positioning: intentional self-positioning and interactive positioning. Self-positioning is a reflexive positioning which is reflected in different discursive practices, e.g. taking responsibility for one's actions, stated beliefs and perspectives. These individual constructions of identity guide people's interactive approaches with others in society, including the education system. Interactive positioning, on the other hand, focuses on the power and influence of others' positioning on individuals' identity formation. With specific reference to the field of education, Yoon (2012) writes that teachers might (un)intentionally position minority students in more positive or negative ways through their interactions. They might

position these students as "other" without realizing that they may be limiting or enhancing the students' opportunities to develop a positive sense of themselves as immigrants. According to Yoon (2012), depending on the perceptions of how others position them, pupils can take up a position as active or more passive learners in different contexts. In fact, several authors have shown that positive positioning by others is necessary for the wellbeing of students and impacts upon their academic and social success. Learning may change as a function of the interrelationships due to social power dynamics (Yoon, 2012).

The dual nature of ethnicity implies that one needs to distinguish between an ethnic identity claimed or felt for by the people themselves and that attributed to them by others (Guibernau & Rex, 1999). To describe these fundamental processes of ethnicity, Eidheim introduced the concepts of dichotomisation and complementarisation (1971, in Eriksen, 2001). Complementarisation refers to an ethnic relationship by which the two groups differ from each other culturally, but are structurally equivalent. Dichotomisation, on the other hand, is characterised by processes of stereotyping and stigmatisation by which one group considers the other inferior. Unfortunately, worldwide there are many examples of dichotomisation by which ethnic minorities (e.g. native communities in Canada or Australia, gypsies, etc. …) and migrant groups in different countries are being stigmatized. Individuals can either accept or reject attributed identities and not all groups react on processes of dichotomisation in the same way. There exists the possibility that the embodied ethnicity of a social group is shaped by that which is attributed to them by others (Guibernau & Rex, 1999). People might also try to overcome the stigmatising dichotomy by undercommunicating their own ethnic identity and by overcommunicating cultural elements of the dominant group in spaces and on moments where there is contact with the latter, whereas in the private domain of home they fully sense and express their ethnic identity. Or reversely, they can decide to overcommunicate their own ethnicity. Of course, these examples only present a minor part of the real range of possible reactions. The central point here is that ethnicity is relative and situational in the sense that there are differences in the degree to which ethnicity plays a significant role and is played out as such in specific situations (Eriksen, 2001). Moreover, as Guibernau and Rex (1994) have shown, the criteria used for ethnic ascription by outsiders might be different from those applied by the groups themselves for self-ascription. As argued by Barth (1969) the boundaries that are considered to define an ethnic group, are constructed boundaries. They are consciously or unconsciously constituted to serve specific purposes (Guibernau & Rex, 1999).

Examples given by Guibernau and Rex of such purposes are: the construction of transnational migrant communities and the forming of social classes and status groups.

4.2. 'Diaspora' and transnationalism

Within contemporary writing, the notion of diaspora has become a conventionally used mode to refer to the global dispersal of people of Chinese descent. Various authors, however, point to the contentious usage of the concept of 'diaspora' and caution for heavy implicit meanings embodied in the term, including uniformity, the loss of homeland, migrants as victims, a remaining desire for return, a refusal to integrate into the host society, and 'diasporic nationalism' (Guibernau & Rex, 1999; Leung, 2003; Ma, 2003; Skeldon, 1994, 2003). None of these classic hallmarks can automatically be applied to the Chinese Diaspora.

Despite the fact that many state authorities and majority groups in the West tend to attribute homogeneity and cohesion rather than diversity to ethnic minority groups, including the Chinese (Benton & Gomez, 2014), the Chinese diaspora is far from homogeneous. Ethnic Chinese are segmented into rich and poor in skills and resources, and by cleavages of distinct migration periods, provenance, destination areas, generation, length of residence, sub-ethnicity and so on (Benton & Gomez, 2014; Ma, 2003). Although some Chinese have been "expelled" from their homeland due to socio-political turmoil, many others can be classified as "willing exiles" or "dynamic, entrepreneurial people", to use Skeldon's later phrasing (2003: p.51), who moved to take advantage of available opportunities. It is thus impossible to speak of one Chinese diaspora. Throughout the literature four major terms tend to crop up to define Chinese immigrants, apart from 'Chinese diasporans': *Huaqiao*, *Huaren*, *Huayi*, and *Yimin*. Although there exists some debate about the concepts' exact definitions, many scholars appear to agree with the following interpretations, as given by Li (1999). *Huaren* denotes Chinese settlers abroad who have obtained foreign citizenship, while *Huayi* generally refers to "Chinese descendants who were born and have grown up outside of China". The term *Yimin* includes the connotation of compulsory migration due to Chinese official policies. Finally, *Huaqiao* refers to those Chinese who "have the permanent right to reside in their adopted country but retain their Chinese citizenship". However, according to Li, various Chinese associations in the Netherlands currently use the term *Huaqiao* in naming their organization, thereby publicly proclaiming Chinese patriotism. "Nevertheless", she writes, "their patriotic

complex is nothing more than an imaginary sense that, in Anderson's words, is just 'a politics without responsibility or accountability' or 'long-distance nationalism'. In effect, it is important to recognize the potential meaning of this phenomenon: they want to gain social elevation in the Netherlands from the strength and prosperity of China." Appadurai (1996) writes that in order to understand the recent migrations and the movement of people, ideas, objects, capital (social, cultural and economic) and identities, we need to realise that people are deterritorialised and are subject to what he calls 'the social imaginary'. By asking the question to what the nature of a locality is as a lived experience in a globalised, deterritorialised world, he makes a very crucial link between the imagination of people and social life.

Lau-Clayton (2014) points to the connection between diaspora and the notions of 'translocalism' and 'transnationalism'. Following Vertovec (1999), she believes that the diasporic communities are becoming today's transnational communities, which are being installed and sustained through a range of social organisation, mobility and communication. The term 'transnationalism' was adopted in the 1990s to refer to the connections between migrants in places of settlement and origin and among diasporans in an era of instant communication and easy travel (Benton & Gregor, 2014). Clearly, Chinese immigrants in Europe form part of wider transnational networks, in symbolic or more concrete ways and at different levels. Chinese networks are physically created and (re)negotiated across transnational boundaries through modern transportation, but also psychically and imaginary through new means of mass communication, such as television and the Internet. This makes it possible for many Chinese immigrants to be in contact with other Chinese in different parts of the world. Many Chinese immigrants are members of Chinese organisations or associations with a local or international character. Some family members even reside halftime in China, Hong Kong or other Western countries[4]. Others don't actually move physically to other places, but form part of a broader social 'Chinese ethnoscape' within which they share a certain cultural and social identity, in the literature often designated as 'Chineseness'. According to Nyíri and Saveliev there is a "changing nature of Chinese sojourn and trade and a shift from immigration to a certain country to continuing sojourn within the limits of a wider region, where national boundaries are not seen as serious obstacles" (Nyíri & Saveliev, 2002, p. 2). They denote this phenomenon as "the globalising of Chinese migration". Various

[4] These are the so-called 'astronaut families'.

studies class transnationalism as a post or supranational identity, just like internationalism or cosmopolitism, which is in clear contrast with the classic idea of migration that entails a lasting rupture with the homeland (Benton & Gregor, 2014). According to Cohen (1997, p. ix) all definitions of diasporic communities have one thing in common.

> "all diasporic communities settled outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, acknowledge that the 'old country' […] always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions. That claim may be strong or weak, or boldly or meekly articulated in a given circumstance or historical period, but a member's adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history and a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background."

The level of this claim and the ways in which it is articulated strongly depend on conditions playing at different localities within the diaspora. Not all Chinese diasporans equally yearn to return to the country of origin (Leung, 2003). Skeldon (1994) argues that in contrast to the diaspora Jews who have always looked to Israel, in the Chinese case it has mainly been the Chinese state that has had strong feelings for the overseas Chinese. Benton & Gomez (2014) explain that ever since the late nineteenth century, the Chinese state has striven to make Chinese diasporans and their descendants "a tool of foreign policy and a source of investment" (p. 1163) by propagating the idea that overseas Chinese belong to China and thus share a common ethnic identity. Although various transnational theories have also emphasized the relationship of diasporan Chinese with China and claimed that foreign-born Chinese are being induced to reclaim their 'Chineseness', many of these studies fail to account for shifts and flexibility in identity and in claims to citizenship among Chinese diasporic communities (Benton & Gomez, 2014). Ma (2003) writes that within our understanding of diaspora 'place' should always be understood as "a social construct and a site at which power arises from the convergence of global, national and regional forces interacting with the local physical, historical, cultural, political and socioeconomic factors" (2003, p. 25). Place can thus produce considerable differences in the features of localities and in the ways communities construct their identities. A so thought-of diasporic community is always characterised by diversity and power hierarchies creating fluctuating social boundaries and diasporic cultures that are dynamic and fluid (Leung, 2003; Ma, 2003). "The identities of an imagined diasporic community no longer (if they ever did) conform the traditional, neatly trimmed, and often timeless Orientalist images […] as a diasporic group comprises

communities of different identities and interests" (Leung, 2003, p. 240). Therefore, the inherent assumption with the term 'diaspora' of the Chinese as 'sojourners'[5] that are clung to a fixed identity and resist assimilation (Skeldon, 2003) should be treated with much caution.

As recently argued by Lau-Clayton (2014), as a social construct, in fact the term 'diaspora' has shifted its meaning and coverage over time. Currently the concept tends to carry an array of definitions with more positive connotations (Leung, 2003; Ma, 2003). Guibernau and Rex, for example, suggest using the term "more loosely to refer to any internationally dispersed ethnic group, whether or not it has nationalist aspirations" (1999, p. 8). Leung (2003) and Ma (2003) mainly use the term to denote the compression of space and time, the mobility and the transnational flows of people, commodities, images, and information, which is an interpretation that coincides with Castells' definition of diaspora as a "space of flows" (Castells, 1996, cited in Ma, 2003). The latter concept transcends the mere movement across geographical space, but instead also encloses people's journeys or "long-term processes undergone, interactively, with the social environments in identity (re)construction, (re)interpretation of positions in the host society and on-going negotiation in defining the meanings of 'home'" (Leung, 2003, p. 238). In line with this school of thought, Lau-Clayton (2014) likewise uses the notion of diaspora to challenge fixed and essentialist conceptions of culture and cultural identity. She relates the concept of diaspora to the notion of hybridity, which according to her should be seen as "the process of cultural amalgamation, 'where the diasporic arrivals adopt aspects of the host culture and rework, reform and reconfigure this in production of a new hybrid culture or hybrid identities' (Chambers 1994:50)" (Lau-Clayton, 2014, p. 20). As such, the concepts of diaspora, hybridity, translocalism and transnationalism lead us to question then what and who determines the categories of 'Chinese' or 'Chineseness'.

4.3. Ethnic boundary making and the precarious nature of 'Chineseness'

Is a third-generation Chinese immigrant child who doesn't speak Chinese and was raised in a so-called Western way still Chinese? The complexity to determine what is Chinese and what is not is an important question because the on-going discourses, claims and disclaims to

[5] Cohen defined 'sojourning' as a "pattern of circular migration" (1997, p. 85)

Chineseness carry with them an important political and ideological dimension (Ang, 1998). Let me refer back to the earlier-cited comments made by Flemish politician Bart De Wever on Chinese immigrants in Flanders and the concomitant opinion piece in the newspaper by Yumi Ng. From their perspective, being Chinese in diaspora means being absent in crime rates and being allergic to self-pity and self-victimization. It entails a subscription to the meritocratic ideal and respect for the norms and culture of the host country. It means being able and willing to *blend in.* In other cases, 'being Chinese' is rather being a marker of one's minority status, being externally imposed by the dominant culture and given meaning by the practice of stigmatization, discrimination, and marginalization (Ang, 1998; Lau-Clayton, 2014; Song, 2004). Suchlike process of defining and making reference to minority communities and statuses "involves drawing boundaries around and freezing the diversity which exists within all social groupings" (Lau-Clayton, 2014, p. 21; Christiansen, 1998, 2003). Central to the contemporary diasporic paradigm, however, is the idea that there is not one but many different Chinese identities (Ang, 1998). Chineseness is an indeterminate signifier whose meanings are social and discursive constructs, constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different parts of the Chinese diasporic realm. Chinese is plural, diverse and relative (Clau-Layton, 2014). According to Ang (1998), we should not dispute the existence of Chineseness, but rather look at how Chineseness as a category with its different meanings operates in practice and what its symbolic and social effectuality are.

To this day, who gets to decide what it means or should mean to be Chinese is the object of intense scholarly contestation, especially within the context of the Chinese diaspora (Ang, 1998). A most influential work on the meaning of being Chinese was edited in the 1990s by Chinese-American professor Tu Wei-Ming, "The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today" (1994). Central to the theory of Tu Wei-ming is his notion of "Cultural China", which broadly includes the PRC, as the central core, and the numerous peripheral Chinese communities such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Chinese of the diaspora, as well as non-Chinese who take an intellectual interest in China or Chinese culture. For Tu Wei-Ming, this agglomeration of different symbolic universes constitutes a new symbolic cultural space, which "both encompasses and transcends the ethnic, territorial, linguistic, and religious boundaries that normally define Chineseness" (Tu, 1994, preface). As a Chinese intellectual living in the diaspora, Tu Wei-ming has been quite critical of the power and authority of the central core, geopolitical China, in defining the agenda of cultural China and what it means to be Chinese in a modern globalized world (Ang, 1998). He wants to break away from the rigid

and conventional conceptions of Chineseness as "belonging to the Han race, being born in China proper, speaking Mandarin, and observing the 'patriotic' code of ethics" (Tu, 1994, preface, vii). Instead, he argues in favour of a more fluid definition of Chineseness as a layered and contested discourse that enables a reconciliation of modernity and Chineseness. From his accounts, it is clear that Tu Wei-ming doesn't believe in the legitimate power of geopolitical China to realise such reconciliation. Being a Neo-Confucianist Chinese diasporan himself and strong criticist of communism, he writes: "while the periphery of the Sinic world was proudly marching toward an Asia-Pacific century, the homeland remained mired in perpetual underdevelopment" (Tu, 1991, p. 154). According to him, the Chinese intellectuals in China were convinced of the incongruity of Chineseness with a modernization process. Peripheral Chinese nations such as Hong Kong and Singapore, on the other hand, had clearly proven that both were indeed compatible and that modernization could enhance rather than weaken chineseness as those countries were modern, but surely not a mere copy of the West (Tu, 1991). As such, Tu believed that stripping modernity from its hegemonically determination by the West was in the hands of the periphery and of the Chinese diasporans. The periphery had become and had to take up even more its active role as the new centre in defining the agenda of cultural China and the conceptualization of Chineseness.

However, within the debate on Chineseness, many other scholars have worked against this idea of a 'cultural China'. Ien Ang, professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Western Sydney and author of various influential works on identity politics, migration and Chineseness, for example, has been rather critical of the work of Tu Wei-Ming (Ang, 1998). She argues that in Tu's self-declared periphery-as-centre discourse of cultural China, there is a continued obsession with the old centre (geopolitical China) as a coherent social and cultural entity and thus with the idea of cultural roots. Underscoring her statement, she refers to the use by Tu-Wei-Ming of the organic metaphor of 'the living tree' to describe cultural China. A living tree constantly develops new branches in various directions from the tree trunk, which in turn feeds itself on a life-sustaining set of roots. Without those roots, the tree cannot grow. As such, the metaphor conveys the belief of the periphery being existentially dependent on the centre, the diaspora on the homeland. According to Ang (1998), the driving force behind Tu's conception of cultural China is his desire to redeem the notion of Chineseness as a marker of common culture and identity in a postmodern world. Likewise, Cho (2010) writes that behind the metaphor of the living tree lies cultural nationalism and "a devotion to the idea of China as an integral and coherent site of cultural belonging that takes

for granted a coherent Chinese subject whose real home is not Canada or the United States or Australia, but an entity called cultural China" (Cho, 2010, p. 138). While Tu defines Chineseness as fluid, his theory does not avow the more radical potential that a diasporic perspective allows, which includes factual hybridity, heterogeneity and cultural amalgamation (Ang, 1998). In fact, with Tu the very notion or category of Chineseness itself is never in question. Against such cultural nationalist claims, writers such as Ieng Ang, Lily Cho, Rey Chow and Allen Chun have attempted to move away from monolithical and hegemonic notions of Chineseness. In her introductory essay in *Writing Diaspora,* Rey Chow is critical of what she calls the Chinese intellectuals' "habitual obsession with 'Chineseness", which encloses a kind of cultural essentialism or "sinocentrism" that "draws an imaginary boundary between China and the rest of the world" (1998, p. 6). She and Ang (1998) both refer to an enduring presence of the notion of race in Chinese discourse, or what Rey Chow calls "the myth of consanguinity", that confines Chinese diasporans as part of a Chinese race or as children of the Yellow Emperor. According to Ang (1988) this imagining of the Chinese race suppresses the existing heterogeneity within the Chinese diaspora in favour of "illusory modes of bonding and belonging".

In sum, if we are to look critically at Chineseness from the diasporic point of view and take into account the multiple and complex politics of being Chinese in today's increasingly globalizing world, we should go beyond a reduction of Chineseness as a seemingly natural and racial essence and be willing to interrogate the significance of the category as a marker of identification and distinction (Ang, 1998). For this dissertation it will not only be important to look at the identity politics of individual Chinese in Flanders, but also to the broader politics involved. Flanders, as a multi-ethnic region, offers a rich context in which to explore the reconfigurements of ethnic and national identity, especially with the emergence of new identities among local-born generations (Benton & Gomez, 2014). In conjunction with this, it will be important to look at the role of potential cleavages, including those based on class, sub-ethnic and generational difference (Benton & Gomez, 2014).

5. Deconstruction of the central research question

In order to fill up the gaps in previous academic studies with regard to the socioeducational integration of Chinese immigrant families in Flanders, as mentioned in the

introductory part of this dissertation, the following central research question has been put forward:

> *How are family strategies centred on education constituted and negotiated by Chinese immigrant families in Flanders in relation to the host society and its educational system as well as in relation to the own ethnic community?*

In the previous sections, various primary anthropological and non-anthropological themes and concepts were discussed to offer relevant insights in the factors influencing the socioeducational integration of immigrant youth. From the vast body of literature on the issue, it is clear that in order to understand the socioeducational integration of Chinese youth in Flanders and the role of family strategies within this process, a wide variety of factors need to be taken into account and examined. Departing from the scholarly discussions and findings above, the central research question of this dissertation will be deconstructed into a set of more specific but clearly interlinked research questions and subquestions. The chapters and sections of Part II of this dissertation will provide an analysis and discussion of this set of subquestions through an exploration of the empirical data and literature.

1) What is the impact of the model minority paradigm on Chinese family strategies for education and the socioeducational integration of Chinese youth in Flanders.
    a) To what extent do different stakeholders in Flanders (school staff, broader society) including the Chinese respondents themselves, endorse the model minority paradigm?
    b) Are there differences between lower and higher SES families regarding the endorsement to the model minority paradigm?
    c) What are the emotional and factual consequences of such endorsement for the Chinese respondents' daily life experiences and educational strategies?
    d) What effect does the paradigm have on the Chinese respondents' social relations with the dominant society? What are the experiences of the Chinese respondents with discriminatory practices in Flemish society in general and the education system in particular and how do they react upon these?
    e) What impact does the endorsement have on the Chinese respondents' social relations with other ethnic minority groups in Flanders?

2) How do the Chinese youngsters and their families conceptualize success?
   a) Which subjective and affective meanings do they attach to school success?
   b) Which causal attributions and consequents of success do they distinguish?

3) To what extent do Chinese families on the one hand and the Flemish society and education system on the other hand consider one another's values, norms and behavioural practices to be congruent or legitimate?
   a) What role does the Chinese families' SES play in the perceived (dis)congruence?
   b) What are the consequences of this perceived (dis)congruence for the ways in which Chinese family strategies for education are developed and negotiated?

4) What is the purport of the parental involvement with the Chinese parent respondents?
   a) Which types of parental involvement (cf. Epstein's typology) can be distinguished?
   b) Which direct of indirect role do the seven dimensions of parent involvement play in the involvement of the Chinese parents (cf. Boerave & Van Rijn, 2010; Samaey et al., 2006)?
   c) Which cultural and/or structural explanations can be brought to the fore to explain the purport of Chinese parental involvement?

5) Which ethnic identification processes can be encountered with the Chinese families in Flanders and what impact do they have on the socioeconomic integration of the Chinese youngsters?
   a) How do Chinese families in Flanders evaluate and represent the meaning of Chineseness as a boundary-setting signifier and when does such group identity count in families' development and negotiation of strategies for education? Which cultural markers of Chinese identity related to education can be distinguished?
   b) What role do the politics of being Chinese in today's increasingly globalizing world and with China on the rise play in respondents' conceptualization of Chineseness and their feelings of bonding and belonging?
   c) What factors help or hinder cross-generational ethnic consciousness and to what extent can we speak of 'cultural fluidity', 'cultural hybridity' and 'multiple identities' with the Chinese respondents?

Chapter 3

Migratory realm: Chinese migration to Belgium

The central aim of this chapter is to map out the Chinese migration to Belgium. Howbeit, any discussion of Chinese migration to Belgium requires a general understanding of the history of Chinese immigration into Europe and its contextualisation in the broader Chinese Diaspora. Following the report on Chinese migration to Belgium of the Federal Centre for Equal Opportunities and for the Battle against Racism (CGKR), throughout the mapping I pay attention to what Pieke (2004) has denoted as "the migration configuration", i.e. "the interaction of different social and political institutions[6] and practices in the countries of origin, passage and destination on the one hand, and migrants' strategies to capitalize on newly created opportunities on the other hand" (in CGKR, 2005, p. 6). Thereupon I focus my attention to the Belgian-Chinese community in terms of demographic distribution, socio-economic status, linguistic background, and educational position. This chapter departs from the finding that Chinese immigrants or diasporans with Chinese ancestral roots cannot be lumped into a singe social category but instead form a very heterogeneous group (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Chinese communities in the diaspora are heterogeneous both through the multiplicity of their migration waves and through the diversity of their geographic origins, socio-economic and educational background, and economic activity (Baldassar, Johanson, McAuliffe & Bressan, 2015; Latham & Wu, 2014).

1. The Chinese Diaspora

1.1. Global dispersion

Chinese migration is not a new occurrence by any means. On the contrary, the Chinese diaspora is a historic as well as a "complex and global/transnational phenomenon" (CGKR, 2005, p. 8; Nyíri & Saveliev, 2002; Skeldon, 1994). For centuries the Chinese have been involved in international migration, a fact reflected by the presence of multi-generational

[6] According the CGKR, these institutions include official bodies, groups of kin, friends, and co-ethnics, as well as human smuggling networks, etc.… (2005:6)

Chinese communities in nearly every country on the globe (Lau-Clayton, 2014; Ma, 2003). The total number of Chinese residing abroad is, however, difficult to calculate. Existing data pose a wide range of problems due to the incompatibility of sources as well as to the fact that few nations have kept reliable statistics on the in-and outflow of Chinese migrants. Ma (2003) additionally points to a conceptual or definitional problem caused by indistinctness regarding the exact meaning of terms such as "overseas Chinese" or "Chinese migrant" (Ma, 2003). Estimations of Chinese people living abroad vary from approximately 33 million in the early 2000s (CGKR, 2005; Ma, 2003; Skeldon, 2003) over 35 million in 2014 (Lau-Clayton, 2014) to even 50 million in 2012 (Wang, 2012). A great number of Chinese emigrants currently reside in Southeast Asia and large numbers have migrated to the United States, Canada Australasia and Western Europe. There have also been movements to less obvious places, such as Latin America, Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe (Lau-Clayton, 2014). The annual average growth of Chinese overseas population between 1955 and 2007 was about 1.9% in Asia, 6.5% in the Americas, 8.8% for Europe, 5% for Oceania, and 3.7% for Africa (Li & Li 2011, cited in Wang, Rober, Dillen & Enzlin, 2015). On average, the proportion of Chinese in Europe is quite modest, although the numbers in its various nations are unclear. In 2000, Ma Mung estimated the total to be approximately 7.695.000 (including Soviet-Union), while Li (2000) spoke of 2.8 million, which counted for 8.4 per cent of the Chinese diaspora worldwide and 0.21 per cent of the total European population at the time (both cited in CGKR, 2005). Yet, as reported by Laczko (2003), the European Federation of Chinese organizations by contrast counted just under 1 million ethnic Chinese in Europe in 1997, including those who were born on European soil or who had become European citizens. Data from the Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission show that at the end of 2007, there were about 1.144.000 Chinese people who have settled down in Europe. However, this number does not include Chinese people who stay short-term, as for example Chinese international students (Li & Li, 2011, cited in Wang et al., 2015). In any case, the European countries with the most significant Chinese communities in terms of population are the UK, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Spain, Belgium and Switzerland (Laczko, 2003)[7].

[7] UK (250.000), France (228.500), The Netherlands (132.000), Germany (100.000), Austria (41.000), Spain (35.000), Belgium (22.000) and Switzerland (13.900) (Li 2000, in CGKR 2005)

1.2. *Huaqiao*: Chinese sojourners[8] before WWII

Before the 19th century the phenomenon of '*chuguo*' or 'going abroad' was part of a historic Chinese tradition that spurred Chinese merchants to leave the country. However due to an empirical decree, until relatively recently, emigration remained the privilege of a select group. A first extensive wave of Chinese emigration took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth century and went predominantly to Southeast Asia (CGKR, 2005; Cohen, 1997; Friman, 2002)[9]. Currently these countries accommodate some of the oldest Chinese settlements and over three quarters of the total group of Chinese residing outside the PRC (Reynebeau, 2008; Skeldon, 2003). In the nineteenth century and at the onset of the twentieth century China was hit by economic and political decline (Benton & Vermeulen, 1987). Western countries on the other hand steadily entered an era of industrialisation and developed an increasing demand for labour (CGKR, 2005). Both phenomena urged villagers from the coastal provinces of Southern China (Guangdong, Fujian) to migrate as labourers, traders or farmers (Ma, 2003). The greater part, however, moved to neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia, including Hong Kong (Skeldon, 1994, 2003)[10]. Or they were recruited by colonial powers to work as 'coolies' in the mining industry, or on plantations and railways[11] in the British and American colonies (Laderman & Léon, 2014). Although these indentured labourers were often praised for their hard work and flexibility, according to various authors they were in actuality victims of a disguised form of slavery that came in handy for various European colonial powers after slavery had been officially abolished (CGKR, 2005; Cohen, 1997)[12]. Many coolies, traders and farmers were not so much settlers, as instead they eventually returned to their home villages after earning sufficient money, "much like falling leaves would naturally return to the roots of trees" (Ma, 2003, p. 21).

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[8] The term 'sojourners' refers to migrants who only temporarily leave their homeland, be it in or out of the same nation. The concept is rooted in Confucian precepts that state that every Chinese who leaves home to seek fortune must eventually return to where his ancestors are buried (Skeldon 1994:6).

[9] Cohen (1997) for example refers to Hokkien merchant communities that conducted trade with Manila in the 16th century and within Japan after 1600. According to Friman (2002) there were already Chinese trade communities in Japan in the 15th century.

[10] Most of them passed through Hong Kong that then served as a transhipment point for Chinese migrants going to neighbouring countries (Lin, 2003). According to Skeldon (1994) the total number of people passing through Hong Kong on their way to other destinations was in the millions between mid-19th and mid-20th centuries.

[11] In the 19th Century many Chinese immigrant worked as cheap labourers in the US, particularly on the Central Pacific Railway and in the mining industry as a result of the Gold Rush. At that time many Americans regarded the influx of Asians as a major threat to white wages and western civilization in general. As a result, the Chinese were labelled as "the Yellow Peril" and were confronted with much racial discrimination.

[12] The Chinese term used for this 'coolie system' is extremely telling in this respect: "buying and selling of pigs" (CGKR, 2005, p. 9).

Europe likewise had early sojourners from Guangdong, Shandong, Shanghai, Zhejiang and Fujian: young men with different social backgrounds ranging from diplomats and students to manual labourers, peddlers and poor seamen who jumped ship in European port cities (Baldassar et al., 2015; Baker, 1994; CGKR, 2005; Leung, 2003; Pang, 2002, 2003a). Chinese immigration into Europe can be traced back to the First Opium War (1839-41) when China was forced to open its doors to the Western world (Latham & Wu, 2014). During WWI, France and the UK recruited many Chinese to form labour battalions at the Western front (Baker, 1994; CGKR, 2005; Paul, 2002) or to dig trenches in France and Belgium (Latham & Wu, 2013). Although after the war most surviving Chinese soldiers were repatriated, some Chinese men either found jobs, stayed on an illegal basis or fled to other European countries, including Belgium (Baker 1994; Liu, 2008). A last group among the first Chinese sojourners in Europe consisted of publicly supported students who were sent to amass knowledge and experience to bring back to China afterwards. Europe, for its part, had its own reasons to encourage Chinese to enrol in its universities. It was considered strategically interesting to use education to assimilate Chinese students who could be supporters and back-ups of the West once they had become elites or high technocrats in China (Liu, 2008).

In general however the 'old' Chinese diaspora to Europe was typified by the emigration of single, unskilled, male labourers who considered themselves 'sojourners' (Skeldon, 1994). Baker (1994) writes that only very few remained after the initial influx and by 1950 there was little trace left of this first wave of Chinese migration to Europe. Those who did stay in Europe mainly settled in Germany, the Netherlands and the UK (Latham & Wu, 2013) and were inclined to settle with other Chinese migrants from the same regions in a common destination area (Ma, 2003). They planted the seeds for various Chinatowns worldwide (Cohen, 1997). According to Baldassar (et al., 2015), around the time of WWII Cantonese seamen from the Pearl River Delta established nascent Chinese communities in Western Europe, which provided the foundation for quickly growing contract labour migration chains in the post-war era. This has laid the foundations for the catering trade and the 1950s wave of Cantonese from Hong Kong who first arrived in Britain and then spread to the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Scandinavia, Spain and Portugal.

1.3. Chinese migration after WWII: new trends and directions

From the communist assumption of power in China in 1949 until after the economic reforms by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, emigration from China was strongly curtailed (Skeldon, 2003). In addition, various settler societies, including Australia, Canada and the United States ceased to accept new Asian migrants until the mid-1960s (Skeldon, 2003). There was however a significant outflow from the Chinese Mainland to Hong Kong around 1960 as a result of the Great Famine[13], and in the second half of the 1970s after the economic reforms were launched (Skeldon, 1994, 2003). From the 1950s onwards Hong Kong became the most important source of the Chinese exodus to Europe, including Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany (Baldassar et al., 2015; Lin, 2003). In the aftermath of WWII, Hong Kong was confronted with the import of cheap rice from Southeast Asia, leaving many rice farmers from the New Territories with a drastic attrition of their livelihood (Baker, 1994; CGKR, 2005). In addition, an increasing competition for jobs due to a considerable influx of immigrants from China, as well as political turmoil on the Mainland and spill-overs in Hong Kong inspired many Chinese from the British-administered territory to move to Europe (Baker, 1994; Skeldon, 2003; Watson, 1975). Between 1984, the moment of signing the Sino-British Joint Declaration that stipulated the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, and the actual restitution in 1997, many Hong Kong residents feared political instability and fled the country (Lin, 2003; Ma, 2002; Salaff et al., 2010; Qin, Li, Rana, & Han, 2011; Skeldon, 1994)[14]. To a large extent this migratory wave was characterised by chain and family migration. Many of its members set up Chinese restaurants and takeaways in European cities. From the 1960s onward, due to restrictions on emigration to Britain for Commonwealth workers, there was a steady increase of family members joining the already-settled males in the restaurant business (Baker, 1994). This coincided with the removal of the nationality-based immigration policies in settler countries (Australia, Canada, US, New Zealand) that discriminated against the Chinese, stimulating new waves of migration to these countries (Skeldon, 1994). In conjunction with the emigration waves from China and Hong Kong, many Chinese also re-located from various Southeast Asian nations (Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam) to the West-European countries such as France, the Netherlands and Portugal,

[13] The Great Chinese Famine was caused by Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961, a socio-economic campaign aimed at China's socioeconomic development and the transformation of China from an agrarian economy to an industrialized collectivist society. It resulted in an immense catastrophe, leaving tens of millions of people death (Wikipedia, Meisner, 1997)

[14] Salaff, Wong & Greve (2010) estimate that between 1984 and 1997 approximately 500.000 Hong Kong residents have left the country.

escaping political and economic insecurity (Baldassar et al., 2015; Lau-Clayton, 2014). These are called the "second wave diasporas" and often took place as a result of negative socio-political conditions and confrontations with discrimination and hostility in their host countries (Lau-Clayton, 2014; Ma, 2003).

From the 1980s onwards, particularly in the late 20th and early 21st century, the scope and nature of the Chinese diaspora changed significantly (Pang CGKR, 2005; Ma, 2003). Different migratory waves consisting of many individuals, responding to divergent circumstances and conditions, and migrating to various regions have made the diaspora increasingly diversified, complex and dynamic (Christiansen, 2003; Latham & Wu, 2013; Nyíri & Saveliev, 2002). The contemporary Chinese 'ethnoscape' (cf. Appadurai, 1991) displays unprecedented diversity regarding migrant profiles, with a strong heterogeneity regarding social class, language, political persuasion and legal status (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Profiles range from the destitute to the wealthy, from low to highly educated, from young to old, and have left "the single-male syndrome" from the past to move to a more gender-balanced[15] and family migration pattern (Skeldon, 1994, p. xiii). With special reference to Europe, Christiansen (2003) states that the main migration waves can be summarized as followed: trade and investment, labour, chain migration, educational migration and clandestine migration. In reality the distinction between these categories is not always clearly delineated. Nyíri and Saveliev speak of "elusive patterns of migration" within which "a migrant may have the double identity of a student and an illegal worker or petty entrepreneur" (2002, p. 1).

One major development has been the development of a new migration movement from a wide range of source regions in the People's Republic of China to Europe, which needs to be viewed in the light of important political, socio-economic and cultural developments in the PRC (CGKR, 2005; Laczko, 2003; Latham & Wu, 2014). China's economic opening and reforms in 1978, the newly created Chinese emigration policy of 1985 and the student revolt at Tiananmen in 1989, all had significant effects lingering into the 1990s and brought about a renewed pattern of chain migration (Liu, 2008). Moreover, a strong increase of international

[15] Federal statistics show that in 2007 the proportion of women within the group of Chinese immigrants to Belgium was approximately 55% (CGKR, 2009).

trade between China and Europe[16] and the dual occurrence of rising consumer power and social inequality in China with a significant divide between rural and urban areas regarding the possibility to benefit from China's economic development, have played a significant role (Latham & Wu, 2014). Other scholars additionally point to technological, economic and immigration policy changes in Western societies as significant pull-factors for Chinese migration (Ma 2002; Skeldon, 1994). These combined factors have brought forth a strong increase of Chinese immigration to Europe, not only to the traditional destinations of the North, but also to Southern, Central and Eastern European countries (Laczko, 2003; Nyíri, 2007). Pieke (1998), for example, has referred to well-educated city dwellers from northern China that migrated to Eastern Europe after the fall of communism (in Baldassar et al., 2015). He states that for those dwellers migration had mostly been an individual decision and that they fostered strong economic ties to China.

Various authors also point to the strongly increasing migration of highly skilled and mobile[17] professionals and entrepreneurs to Europe, adding to the similar already existing flow of technical workers to the United States, Japan, Canada and Australia (Laczko, 2003; Zhang, 2003). They are called "*haiwai zhuanye renshi"* (overseas professionals) (Li, 2002, p. 173). They stem from different areas, including Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and constitute one group of 'modern' Chinese migrants (Chan & Chan, 2011; Leung, 2003). According to Latham & Wu (2013) most current Chinese immigration to the EU is economic migration in quest of job or business opportunities, by which many Chinese stay, though assuming they will eventually return to China, even if only in retirement.

Another popular technique of emigration from Mainland China has been to studying abroad (Laczko, 2003; Latham & Wu, 2013; Li, 2002)[18]. Initially students were publicly financed[19] by the Chinese government and mostly returned back to China after completing their studies. Their return was considered an instrumental means for alleviating the brain drain that China had suffered as a result of the Cultural Revolution and became an important

[16] Between 1999 and 2009, the international trade between China and Europe increased 6.26 times (Latham & Wu, 2013)

[17] Chan & Chan (2011) apply the term "Shuttling Nomads" to refer to groups of highly mobile Chinese entrepreneurs who 'shuttle' between the triangle of birthplace, home and workplace.

[18] According to estimates by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, in the period between 1978 and 2000 the number of Chinese students studying abroad stood at more than 500.000 (Zhang, 2003). Xi (2002) notes that by 2002 various traditional European college countries (UK, France, Germany) each accommodated more than 10.000 Chinese students. They were considered by many Chinese as academically superior.

[19] They were called "*gongpai"* or "*gongfei liuxuesheng*" (publicly financed overseas students) (Li, 2002, p. 175)

strategy of the new government (Cheng, 2002; Li, 2002). In a short period of time, the share of self-supporting Chinese students[20] increased substantially (Cheng, 2002; Zhang, 2003). In terms of regional distribution, the latter mainly moved to Europe (UK, Germany, France), the US and Oceania (Zhang, 2003) and did not return to China (Li, 2002; Xin, 2002). Some of them obtained permanent residence in the country of study, others moved onwards to other regions, while a third group oscillated between non-remaining and non-returning. Generally speaking all of them reflected a "high degree of mobility" (Xin, 2002, p. 163). "Overseas study", so Zhang writes, "has become an expression of the freedom of choice and movement, enjoyed by Chinese citizens" (2003, p. 86). Recently, Latham & Wu (2013) also pointed to the role of internationalization of higher education in European countries, which has led to a strong increase in the number of Chinese students currently studying at European universities. Those students mostly come from highly educated and white-collar families in the PRC and while many of them return, considerable numbers also stay, depending on the employment opportunities in the host country.

Zhang (2003) notes that public opinion in China regarding the non-return of these overseas students and professionals is divided. While one school of thought appears quite optimistic and considers this outflow a convenient vehicle for future foreign investment in and international trade with China (Zhang, 2003)[21], many others fear the severe risks a continuing brain drain poses to China's international competitiveness and future socio-economic and cultural development.[22] The same is true for Hong Kong. Both China and Hong Kong have long been attempting to lure back those who have left by rendering a return both socially and financially attractive (CGKR, 2005; Skeldon, 1994). As yet however less than half have returned and when they do, it has often been only temporarily.[23]

A last group of Chinese migrants to Europe and elsewhere makes up "a clandestine diaspora" and consists of illegal economic diasporans, whether or not victims of human smugglers or 'snakeheads' (Baldassar et al., 2015; CGKR, 2005; Ma, 2003; Skeldon, 1994). One such group is the wave of illegal Chinese migrants from Fujian province who were

[20] Traditionally these students were called "*zifei liuxuesheng",* but other terms have been deployed as well: "*liuxue renyuan"* (persons studying overseas), "*haiwai xueren"* (overseas literati) (Li, 2002, p. 175)
[21] In 2003 Laczko writes that nearly half of the Chinese students in Europe return home after the completion of their studies. This brings him to presume less apparent brain drain effects in Europe than in the United States.
[22] Already in 1994 a study group was set up by the Ministry of Personnel and Overseas Chinese Affairs to investigate whether overseas Chinese students intended to return or not (Xi, 2002).
[23] Source: www.zwartvantvolk.be/downloads/w2h2.pdf

smuggled to Europe (mainly Germany) in the mid of the 1980s (Baldassar et al. 2015). China's spectacular and highly visible economic growth has not brought fortune to all its citizens. On the contrary, many people are confronted with unemployment and poverty and find themselves far removed from the country's economic boom. These people generally look upon migration as a useful vehicle to socio-economic promotion despite recurring discouraging messages and events. The Dover container tragedy of 2000 leaving 58 Chinese migrants dead from asphyxiation made policy makers aware of the increasing Chinese migration to Europe and urged both sending and receiving countries to become actively involved in bilateral cooperation with respect to asylum and immigration policies (Laczko, 2003). One statistical indicator of irregular migration is the number of asylum claims in a particular country. Between 1989 and 2002 the overall trend in Chinese applications in Europe has been one of "gradual increase with significant fluctuations" with specific peaks in 2000 and 2002 (Laczko, 2003, p. 13). In 2010 Chinese asylum seekers made up the third-largest asylum group in the world, though to many of them the United States remains the most popular destination country (UNHCR, 2011).

Recently Latham and Wu (2013) have shown that the distribution of overseas Chinese population in Europe still only accounts for a small proportion of the total. According to their estimations the current total of overseas Chinese in EU countries would be 2.3 million. However, looking at the growth rate, they found that the Chinese immigration into Europe has grown really rapidly over the past three decades, namely from 600,000 in 1980 to 2.15 million in 2007. Behind Africa, Europe is now ranked second in growth rate. This not only shows, so the authors state, that Europe is an increasingly important and attractive destination for Chinese migrants, but also that new Chinese migrants make up an important proportion of the total number of Chinese immigrants in Europe. They further state that nowadays in Europe we have come a long way from the primacy of the Chinese takeaway and catering sector as there are communities of first, second, third and fourth generation Chinese, with particularities and differences in economic behaviour and engagement in different kinds of activity across Europe.

2. Chinese migration to Belgium

Chinese migration to Belgium is likewise characterised by various migratory waves with people emigrating from different regions and for distinct reasons. In fact, the Chinese community in Belgium is largely intertwined with the larger Chinese communities in neighbouring countries, such as France and the Netherlands (Latham & Wu, 2013). The first wave dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century and consisted mainly of single men who worked as cheap labourers aboard ocean steamers of Dutch & British shipping companies. Most of them originated from the poor Southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian in China and considerable numbers "jumped ship" at different European ports, including London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Amsterdam as well as Antwerp (Baker, 1994; CGKR, 2005; Leung, 2003; Pang, 2002, 2003b). Alongside this immigration of seamen, a loose group of sojourning itinerant merchants, street vendors, and contract workers, mostly from Zhejiang Province, found their way to Belgium (Liu-Huang, 2008). In the view of Pang (2002) these temporary workers replicated the former coolie trade in the colonies. She writes that those who remained in Belgium laid the foundations of the subsequent pattern of chain migration. Another group of early Chinese sojourners in Belgium was made up of students. At the onset of the 20th Century three Belgian academic institutions joined a proposed project to educate future Chinese leaders, i.e. the National Ghent University, Université Nationale de Liège, and the Ecole Royale Militaire (Liu, 2008). A total of 86 students came as a result of this policy. Chinese students who came to Belgium before WWII and who could not get support from the Chinese government were either linked with the socialists or the Catholic Church. The latter in particular appeared to actively recruit student members (Liu, 2008).

A second wave of Chinese migration to Belgium unfolded after WWII and was marked by family migration from Hong Kong (CGKR, 2005). After all, posterior to the establishment of the PRC, emigration from China was severely curtailed. From the 1960s onwards until 1974[24] chain migration from the British colony became the main source of Chinese immigrants in Belgium. During this period Belgian companies recruited many

[24] In 1974 Belgium launched an 'immigration ban'. From then on economic immigration was only allowed for strictly defined categories of foreign workers, excluding lower educated and unskilled migrants (Pang, 2003b; Lens, 2013)

foreign guest workers as a result of bilateral agreements between the Belgian government and eight foreign nations.[25] Chinese immigrants did not form part of this official recruitment policy, but came of their own accord, mainly through the traditional Chinese patriarchal kinship system (Pang, 2003b, 2007b). Pang writes that many Chinese used this system, with its extended families, to give remote kin and fellow villagers the opportunity to migrate to Europe (Pang, 2003b, 2007b). This was also the time referred to as the 'Golden Sixties' during which various European countries pursued a relatively lenient immigration policy with low entrance barriers (Pang, 2003b). Many Chinese men took advantage of this and entered Belgium on a tourist passport to eventually obtain work permits (Pang, 2002). After being employed as kitchen help for a couple of years, they proceeded to open their own restaurants, often with the financial help of family or lineage members (Pang, 2002). This development of a Chinese restaurant sector gave cause for a subsequent "chain and social network migration" (CGKR, 2005, p. 13; Liu, 2008; Pang, 2008). Although the restaurant owners initially intended to return to China after several years of hard work, many had their wives and children join them and hence remained. Sometimes other relatives or friends from the homeland were prodded to come to Belgium and work in the existing businesses. Yet others came on their own initiative and introduced new migration chains. According to field observations by Liu (2008) the Cantonese from Hong Kong in the 1950s, 1960s and stretching into the 1970s, then those from Qingtian County in the 1980s and the Fujian people in the 1990s, benefited from chain migration. One of her Cantonese-speaking informants even claimed that his uncle had recruited more than one hundred fellow villagers to come to Belgium.

The contemporary wave of Chinese immigration to Belgium set off with the initiation of China's modernisation policy implemented by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. In the wake of these important socio-economic reforms, official regulations in the PRC regarding emigration and traveling abroad were considerably loosened. From then on new flows can be identified with Chinese migrants coming from different parts of Mainland China, including Shanghai, Northern China and Fujian, as well as from other Southeast Asian countries. Latham & Wu (2013) also note that from the 1990s onwards, there has been a new influx of Chinese, mainly from the Wenzhou and Qintian regions of Zhejiang Province, but also from regions with a

[25] Between 1952 and 1968 Belgium signed bilateral agreements with eight countries regarding foreign labour: Spain (1956), Greece (1957), Morocco (1964), Turkey (1964), Italy (1966), Tunis (1969), Algeria (1970) and Yugoslavia (1970) (Lens, 2013)

less-well established history of overseas migration, e.g. northeastern China and Fujian. These migration waves generally took place within a much more restrictive immigration policy. From the 1970s onwards, politicians started to realize that many of the so-called 'guest workers' and other migrants intended to stay rather than return to their respective homelands. Starting from the official immigration ban in 1974, immigration policy therefore just yet consisted of two main categories: one was based on humanitarian grounds (asylum), the other on family reunification (CGKR, 2005; Lens, 2013; Pang, 2008). Economic migration was reduced to a minimum. In reality though economic migration and family reunification sometimes overlap. Recently it was demonstrated by Lens (2013) that for Chinese immigrants family reunification still remains a significant gateway into our country. According to her calculations based on figures from the Belgian Immigration Office, between 2008 and 2011 China was part of a group of foreign countries that annually obtained between 2 to 4 per cent (= minimum of 515 each year) of the first legal residencies through family reunification.

Overseas Chinese students and highly skilled professionals currently form another important part of Chinese migration to Belgium (Caestecker, 2012; CGKR, 2005, 2010; Leung, 2003; Pang, 2008). The Chinese currently are the largest group – i.e. about 8 per cent - within the international students at Flemish Institutes of higher education (Caestecker, 2012). As a result of the general modernization policy by Deng Xiaoping students were stimulated to varying degrees to go and study abroad. Between 1978 and 1985 many of them were awarded with scholarships by the Chinese government in order to specialize in areas considered useful for China's future. In addition scholarships have been administered in an increasing degree by foreign universities, including Belgian. Between 1985 and 1989 a new phenomenon sets in, namely that of the free mover or self-supporting student (*zifei*), bringing about new waves of students. The year of 2002 thereby constitutes a record year, with 1401 applications for student visas from the PRC (CGKR, 2005; Pang, 2008). As was shown by various scholars this was a direct result of more restrictive admission procedures in the US in the aftermath of 9/11 (Pang, 2006). Concerns were raised that some residing in Belgium with student visas were not studying full-time, and there were complaints about them working illegally in Chinese restaurants instead of studying (Caestecker, 2012). This caused the Belgian authorities to devise new restrictions[26] halving the number of Chinese that could enter on a

[26] In order to prove their financial means Chinese students had to open an account in a Belgian bank in China and deposit enough money to cover for 1 year of studies at a Belgian university. This money was then allocated to them in monthly allotments. In addition were they screened through the APS-procedure to verify the

student visa in 2007. However, in subsequent years the inflow slowly recovered and in 2010 the major Flemish newspaper 'De Morgen' reported once more on the vast presence of Chinese students at Flanders' universities. It stated that there were a total of 15.423 foreign students in total, of which 1046 were Chinese (Belga, 2010). Also Latham & Wu (2013) note that in recent years, applications from China for student visas in Belgium, numbering around 3000 in 2008 – have been on the increase. The Catholic University of Leuven and the University of Ghent are the most popular for these Chinese students. Amongst the group of highly skilled and executives who have obtained a special work permit, the Chinese took the fourth place.[27] Other Chinese immigrants have come through the channels of marriage and business investments, especially from the PRC and Taiwan (Leung, 2003).

Another group of Chinese migrants to Belgium consists of clandestine migrants (CGKR, 2005). Many of them initially intended on moving to English-speaking countries, especially the United States and the UK, but were stranded in Belgium due to financial debts to human smugglers or because they were arrested by the police.[28] Obviously no reliable figures are available for the total number of illegal Chinese in Belgium, due the nature of these migrations. However, data from the Hippocrates study on victims of human smuggling shows that they are chiefly young men between 25 and 35, originating from Fujian, Zhejiang or Shanghai. They work informally in the Chinese catering industry in order to remit money to their families in China. In 2004 Chinese in Belgium were one of the top ten nationalities employing illegal workers.[29] The number of asylum applications by ethnic Chinese on the other hand is rather limited in Belgium (CGKR, 2005, 2009; Pang, 2008)[30]. According to CGKR most applications are submitted by Tibetans (CGKR, 2005, 2010). In 2007 the Chinese made out 3.84 per cent of the total group recognized refugees.

In general one can observe the historic Chinese trend of going abroad to be continuing. Sun writes: "For millions of Chinese who have never set foot on foreign soil, the world out

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authenticity of their degrees, and Flemish authorities even went so far as to impose more selective admission to the APS-procedure. For more information on the topic I refer to the report by Frank Caestecker (2012).

[27] Source: www.zwartvantvolk.be/downloads/w2h2.pdf

[28] Source: www.zwartvantvolk.be/downloads/w2h2.pdf

[29] Source: Presentation of Ching Lin Pang, Victims or heroes? Elucidating the Profile of Current Irregular Chinese Migrants in Belgium. International Workshop 'Migrations between the East and the West: Normalizing the Periphery. Xiamen University, China, 2-6 April 2006. Data was obtained by Pang from the Annual Report 2004 of the Comité Fédéral (2005).

[30] According to the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons the number of asylum application submitted by Chinese nationals was 135 in 2007, 329 in 2009, and 182 in 2010. The number of recognized cases in 2010 amounted to 101 (Commissariaat voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen, 2010).

there remains a place of perpetual fascination" (2002, p. 2)[31]. Official institutes and scholars see little indications of declining emigration from China in the near future; on the contrary, the opposite seems to be the case[32] (CGKR, 2005, 2009, 2010; Waters, 2006). As a result of the country's rapid economic growth the outflow of different categories will more than likely increase: students, highly skilled professionals, clandestine migrants, and with them possibly also a surge in those moving under the category of family reunification (CGKR, 2005, 2009, 2010; Waters, 2006). A growing gulf between rich and poor, a highly competitive education system, fierce competition on the job market, more well-off families that can afford to look abroad for opportunities, and the growth of a multi-billion dollar international education 'industry', will in all likelihood add to the already expansive Chinese diaspora (Laczko, 2003; Waters 2006). Globally, people tend to take the family group in mind when considering the prospect of migration, and the Chinese are no different. Within Chinese society migration is still considered a useful and much respected means to accumulate the family's economic, cultural and social capital. Despite its inherent challenges, difficulties and sacrifices, migration is believed to be an inevitability for some, although positive strategy for upward social mobility and hence keeps firing the imagination of many Chinese youngsters in the homeland (CGKR, 2005). In this setting (transnational) kinship structures and moral obligations to reciprocity and mutual assistance keep underpinning what has been denoted by Salaff and colleagues as the "Chinese family's migration project" (Salaff et al., 2010, p. 14).

3. Socio-demographic profile of the Chinese in Flanders

3.1. The Chinese in numbers

Quantitative data on foreign origin or ethnic minority populations in Belgium are limited (Jacobs et al., 2009a). The most important source for information on immigration and emigration flows and the number of foreigners ('stock') is the official State Register. The

[31] The same findings also appear in the book 'In elk rivier schijnt een maan. Over verlangen en verandering in China' by Veerle De Vos, a Belgian journalist who lived and taught in China (Wuhan) from 1993 to 1995. She writes that many of her students (18-22 years old) either dreamed of working for foreign companies or going abroad to study or work. Such feelings were strongly fuelled by television programs, such as "A Pekinger in New York" (1993). This very popular TV drama deals with a Chinese family trying out its luck in the United States. Even though the story ends dramatically, many people in China were nonetheless dazzled by the luxury and wealth of American life (Vos, de & Luwei, 2012).

[32] The CGKR Year Report of 2010 shows that immigration from Asia counted for 27 per cent of the influx from third countries. India and China were identified as the front-runners.

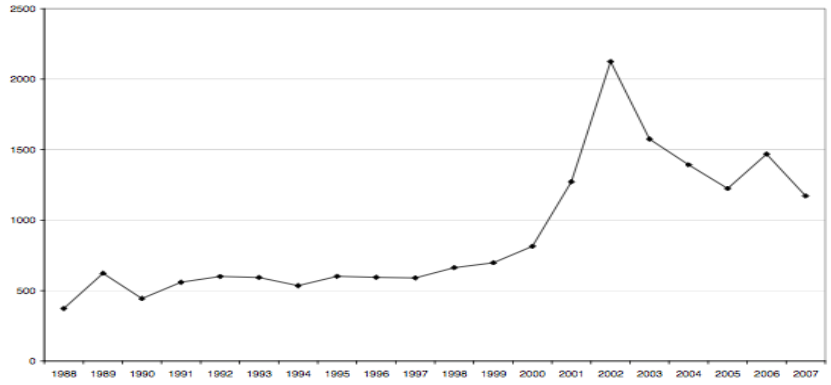
register however does not include information on clandestine migrants and asylum seekers[33]. Nor does it inform regarding the total number of ethnic minorities in the country, as nationality is the only available criterion for distinction. Therefore second-generation migrants are absent in the statistics. In addition, although there exists registration of ethnic minority people who have acquired the Belgian nationality through the principle of naturalisation, determining how many people with a certain ethnic background reside in the country remains a job for specialists. Moreover, as previously demonstrated, within the diaspora Chinese migrants are found to have different ethno-national identities and therefore in the federal statistics they are classified on the basis of nationality, not their ethnic background.

Despite the limited scope of data availability, as shown above, some data does exist. According to official statistics[34] from 2007, PRC Nationals make up approximately 5,3 per cent of the registered non EU-migrants in Belgium[35] (CGKR, 2009). This rate corresponds to 7985 Chinese immigrants, half of which can be found in Flanders[36]. This makes them the 15th most numerous immigration group based on nationality (Algemene Directie Werkgelegenheid En Arbeidsmarkt, 2009). As stated before, these figures are not representative of the presence of ethnic Chinese in Belgium, as the bulk of this group are naturalized or were attributed Belgian citizenship at birth.[37] In 1991 approximately 3170 persons possessed Chinese nationality at birth; in 2007 that number had increased to 14.537 (Algemene Directie Werkgelegenheid En Arbeidsmarkt, 2009). Still, the real number of ethnic Chinese in Belgium is much higher. In 1997 Ma (2003) already estimated the total to be 23.000. By 2006, Ching Lin Pang spoke of "a conservative estimation of 25.000" and in 2013, Latham and Wu made an indicative estimate of 45.000 Chinese residents in Belgium, thereby stating that this figure is probably among the most reliable scholarly estimates currently available. According to Latham & Wu (2013), more than 72% per cent of Chinese immigrants are concentrated in only four European countries (UK, France, Italy and Spain), but Belgium is nonetheless among the top ten European countries by size of Chinese population.

[33] Since 1995 these are listed in a separate register, 'het wachtregister'.
[34] FOD Economy – AD SEI (CGKR, 2009)
[35] This number excluded asylum seekers and refugees
[36] Compared to other years: 1995 (3572), 2001 (3975), 2002 (4567), 2008 (8254) (CGKR, 2009; Algemene Directie Werkgelegenheid en Arbeidsmarkt, 2009)
[37] Source: Presentation of Ching Lin Pang, Victims or heroes? Elucidating the Profile of Current Irregular Chinese Migrants in Belgium. International Workshop 'Migrations between the East and the West: Normalizing the Periphery. Xiamen University, China, 2-6 April 2006.

Chinese immigration to Belgium

1988-2007



Source: RR – AD SEI (CGKR, 2009)

Table 4: Growth and distribution of the Chinese population in Europe, 1998–2011

Region	Rank (2011)	Country	1998	2008	2011[a]	Current trend
EU	1	United Kingdom	250,000	600,000	630,000	Growing
	2	France	225,000	500,000	540,000	Growing
	3	Italy	70,000	300,000	330,000	Slowing
	4	Spain	35,000	168,000	170,000	Slowing
	5	Germany	100,000	160,000	170,000	Growing
	6	Netherlands	127,500	150,000	160,000	Growing
	7	Ireland	10,000	60,000	70,000	Growing
	8	Belgium	23,000	40,000	45,000	Level
	9	Austria	20,000[b]	40,000	40,000	Level
	10	Portugal	2,700	30,000	30,000	Slowing
	11	Sweden	12,800	30,000	28,000	Slowing
	12	Greece	600	12,000	20,000	Dropping
	13	Denmark	12,800	18,000	18,000	Slowing
	14	Hungary	10,000	16,000	18,000	Growing
	15	Romania	3,000	10,000	9,000	Dropping
		Other	16,320	19,970	24,200	Growing
		EU subtotal	**939,720**	**2,153,970**	**2,307,200**	**Growing**
Non-EU		Russia	200,000	300,000	-	-
		Other	28,000	60,500	-	-
		Subtotal	**228,000**	**360,500**	-	-
Europe: total			**1,167,720**	**2,514,470**	-	-

(Source: Latham & Wu, 2013, p. 27)

3.2. General educational and occupational background

The educational level of the first waves of Chinese migrants to Belgium was generally low. This is in line with findings regarding Chinese migration gathered from other parts of Europe (Li, 2002; Zhang, 2003). According to the study of Zhang (2003) of the total Chinese immigrant population in Europe in 1991 only 53 per cent had completed secondary education. For 20 per cent their educational careers had come to an end during or after completing primary school. Findings from the *Bet You!* survey reveal that approximately 21% of Chinese mothers[38] and 27.5% of Chinese fathers in Ghent, Antwerp and Genk have obtained a diploma of higher education. However, these figures should be read cautiously, considering they are the results of student reporting. Furthermore, in the survey about ¼ of Chinese pupils state they are ignorant about their parents' highest degree. In any case, their educational profiles contrast considerably with that of Chinese communities in countries such as Canada and the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 survey, approximately 96 per cent of Chinese immigrants in the United States completed high school and 67 per cent attained a college degree (Qin et al., 2011, p. 158). The more recent and regular Chinese migrants in Europe are often better educated as a result of the continuous influx of students and highly educated professionals. It can be expected that the clandestine migrants generally have a lower educational background.

With regard to the second generation Chinese in Belgium I have already noted that Chinese pupils in Flanders are strongly represented in the general track. The recent and large survey undertaken by the *Bet You!* Research team has revealed the following figures: 55 per cent of Chinese secondary school pupils of the second grade can be found in ASO (general), 15 per cent in TSO (technical), 25 per cent in BSO (vocational) and 4 per cent in KSO (art). As a group they not only exceed all other ethnic minority groups in Flanders, but also their native counterparts.

In the same survey of the total group of Chinese mothers, 64% were working full- or part-time, of which 38% worked as independent entrepreneurs, 25% as blue-collar workers, and 21% as white-collar workers. Of the total group of Chinese fathers, about 87% were

[38] This is in strong contrast with recent figures from the JOP Monitor that indicate that on average 27% of Antwerp mothers of pupils and 40% of Ghent mothers of pupils is highly educated (college or university) (Roggemans et al. 2013).

working full- or part-time, of which most were independent entrepreneurs. In 1997 the most prevalent professional activities of the Chinese in Belgium were concentrated in the catering business, in retail shops, and in food processing or agribusiness (Ma, 2003). Since WWII in particular, the restaurant business has been an important pillar of the Chinese economy in Flanders, as is the case in other Western European countries, including the UK (Baker, 1994; Lau-Clayton, 2014) and Holland (Li, 2002). For Chinese immigrants, the catering industry has carried numerous inherent salient advantages that enabled them to become economically independent. First of all, it represented a niche sector that was in demand resulting from a growing desire with the Western middle class for exotic food (Baker, 1994; CGKR, 2005; Liu, 2008; Skeldon, 1994,)[39]. In addition, the sector was characterised by high accessibility, especially in the past. Not only was there little regulation, but work in the restaurants also demanded limited Dutch proficiency, educational attainment or skills (CGKR, 2005; Pang, 2008). The Chinese worked hard and long hours, and family members (also children) were mobilized to help out (CGKR, 2005). Pang (2003b) writes that the Chinese are anchored in the traditional regime of the family and that small restaurant businesses should be seen as a safe haven for family members vis-à-vis the potentially discriminating labour market. In a period of thirty years they managed to gain sufficient financial welfare and also improved their social position, despite being confronted with discrimination and arrears, especially in the earlier days (Pang, 2007b). According to Pang (2003a) this potential of immigrant entrepreneurship as an avenue to social mobility has often been overlooked. The relationships of the first generations with the majority were however often based on instrumentalism and generally kept to a minimum (Pang, 2003a)). After all, many of the earlier migrants still assumed they were going to return and hence were much more homeland-oriented (CGKR, 2005). As I will demonstrate later, the second generation, which makes up the largest group of pupil respondents, is now embedded in the Flemish society in a variety of ways.

As the more recent Chinese migrants are often better educated, they are also economically more prosperous. They are much less engaged in the traditional occupations, such as retail and catering business. According to Latham & Wu (2013) the international trade **between China and the EU** has led to a diversification of Chinese business interests away from the traditional catering sector. For example, nowadays, one can also find Chinese immigrants offering services to Chinese tourists coming to Europe. Of the 23.028 B labour

[39] Due to gradual saturation of the Chinese catering sector in the UK, many Chinese eventually moved onwards to other European countries as for example Belgium (Leung 2003).

cards that were issued to non-EU foreign employees in 2007, 302 (1.3%) of them were given to Chinese[40] (Algemene Directie Werkgelegenheid En Arbeidsmarkt, 2009). These cards are awarded in case of labour shortages on the local labour market. In addition, a total of 335 special B labour cards (4.44%) were issued to highly skilled Chinese workers. In this case neither the labour market situation nor the nationality of the worker are taken into account (Algemene Directie Werkgelegenheid En Arbeidsmarkt, 2009). Although the number might seem small, the Chinese still constitute the fifth largest group within the highly skilled influx, after India, Japan, Turkey and the United States.

3.3. Language

With respect to mother tongue amongst Chinese migrants, the overall picture is diverse. It is important to note is that there is no single Chinese language, as a variety of dialects constitute the various types of what is referred to as "Chinese", with a version of the Beijing dialect (Mandarin) historically acting as an official language of the country. As the oldest and largest group of Chinese originates from Hong Kong and the Southern provinces of China, to a large extent the lingua franca of the Chinese community in Flanders is Cantonese. However, as a result of the more recent waves of migrants from Mainland China, the recurrence of Mandarin (*Putonghua*) is increasingly noticeable. Apart from these two official languages, many Chinese also speak local dialects emanating from their home regions. Overall, this diversity of mother tongues appears to be an important criterion of social grouping.

3.4. Invisible community

Throughout Europe authors have referred to Chinese diasporic groups as 'invisible communities', including in the UK (Baker, 1994; Lau-Clayton, 2014) and Belgium (Pang, 2003a). In Belgium or Flanders little is known about the Chinese population. They rarely attract attention from politicians or researchers and have remained almost invisible in the general migration discourse. Pang writes that what partly underlies the Chinese invisibility is

[40] For comparison: 2004 (131), 2005 (220), 2006 (298).

their tranquil incorporation into the local labour market as self-employed entrepreneurs (Pang, 2003a). Another reason relates to the Chinese families' settlement patterns. Across the globe Chinese sojourners tended to establish "bachelor societies" in downtown Chinatowns, which traditionally functioned as urban ethnic enclaves or "spaces of difference" (Ma, 2003, p. 23). According to Ma this pattern largely resulted from exclusionary legislation and a general discriminatory atmosphere that prevented Chinese from settling in more well-off neighbourhoods. In the words of Cohen (1997, p. 91): "The growth of Chinatowns became the unique institutional vehicle for the Chinese to be in, but not necessarily to become of, the societies in which they settled". Qin et al. (2011) write that this social reception context significantly affected the schooling of the children of Chinese immigrants in such situations. The Chinese community in Belgium on the other hand was never forced to settle in restricted sites and hence displays a pattern of more spatial dispersal. This is clearly reflected in the scattered localisation of Chinese restaurants in Flanders. They can be encountered not only in every big city, but are just as likely to be found in the smallest rural villages.[41] After all, they chiefly aimed at serving Belgian customers, not co-ethnics (Pang, 2007a). Even within the highly populated Flemish cities, the Chinese generally do not reside in specific or delineated neighbourhoods (Pang, 2003b), with the exception of some minor clustering in the Chinatowns of Antwerp and Brussels[42]. As a site for living these Chinatowns now mainly attract new migrants that are less well-off (Ma, 2003). This coincides with more recent findings from the US. These show that socio-economic diversity gives rise to different mobility patterns. While contemporary Chinese immigrants in the US increasingly settle in suburban White neighbourhoods, new migrants may "continue to follow the traditional bottom-up route to social mobility, starting their American life in isolated enclaves" (Qin et al., 2011, p. 160).

Both Chinatowns in Flanders emerged in the mid-1970s and still constitute junctions of Chinese community life and symbolic cultural spaces where 'Chineseness' is substantiated (Pang, 2007a). Antwerp's Chinatown, although small in size, currently maintains a cluster of Chinese commercial businesses, restaurants, associations, religious sites, and schools, notably a Chinese language school. Various scholars nonetheless argue that despite this socio-cultural

[41] According to estimates from 2008 there are approximately 1255 Chinese restaurants and take-aways in Belgium, which counts for one Chinese catering business for every 8000 inhabitants (Liu, 2008).
[42] This is somewhat different from the settlement patterns of the Chinese in the United States and Canada. The study of Ma shows that there the Chinese who have worked their way up, as well as the new and higher educated Chinese migrants mostly settle in "ethnoburbs", or "suburban ethnic clusters with a high level of Chinese concentration" (2003, p. 23).

and economic function, most Chinatowns in Europe also function as "exotic ethnoscapes[43]" or "ethnic precincts of leisure and consumption" for the native majority (Pang, 2007a). Cohen goes as far as to denote them as "socially constructed versions of ancient Chinese practices" (1997, p. 93). He thus seems to consider them as sites that seek to feed the natives' imaginative craving for an essentialized Orient. Without expanding upon the matter – for this is not within the scope of this dissertation – we can state that Chinatown as an 'ethnic site' still bears much cultural symbolic meaning, for both in- and outsiders alike.

4. Summary

In this chapter, an overview – albeit non-exhaustive - has been given of the history and nature of the global Chinese diaspora. It was demonstrated that Chinese migration is by no means new. International movement of Chinese people has been occurring for centuries. Prior to WOII Chinese people have migrated through a large number of different channels and to a great variety of destination countries. Although in that era, the majority of Chinese migrants was male and unskilled and was sojourning or returned to China, they however planted the seeds for various Chinatowns in Europe and contract labour migration chains in the 1950s. Since WOII and especially from the 1960s on, Chinese migration has become much more complex and diverse with Chinese diasporans coming from different countries, settling in a variety of locations, speaking different languages and dialects, and having distinct socioeconomic, political, educational and cultural backgrounds. The diversity of migration timing, volume, origins, and waves makes any notion of a cohesive European Chinese community somewhat contentious. In fact, the same complexity and diversity is reflected in the profiles of the Belgian-Chinese migrants and cautions for lumping the Chinese migrants into one single social category.

In Flanders, Chinese diasporic groups have remained relatively unvisible in the migration discourse as they rarely attracted attention from politicians or socioeducational researchers. Therefore in chapter six, i.e. the first chapter of PART II which constitutes the

[43] The concept of "ethnoscape" was introduced by Arjun Appadurai (1996) and refers to what he identifies as "the landscapes of group identity" (p. 48) or "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individual constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (p. 33)

empirical body of this study, a critical eye will be cast over the individual migration trajectories and family background of the respondents. It will include a discussion on families' lifestyle choices by taking a closer look at motives for migration, the families' educational and professional status and religious affiliations. In the following chapter, a succinct glance is furst cast on the history of the educational systems in Hong Kong and China.

Chapter 4

Education policies in China & Hong Kong

Writing about family strategies of Chinese immigrants centred around education inevitably also requires a diachronic perspective and thus a succinct historic overview of the development of the educational system in the respondents' countries of origin. A complete history of education policies in China and Hong Kong during the 20th century to date is both impossible to cover, and unnecessary. Therefore, this chapter seeks to highlight only key events and features that have shown to be of particular relevance for the analysis of the data.

1. Education in the People's Republic of China: 1949 – Present day

Prior to the assumption of power by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, China was economically poor and had a large populace that was primarily rural and illiterate. As shown by Pepper (1996), between 1958 and 1966 extensive education reforms took place as a result of the Great Leap Forward led by Mao Zedong. The objectives of this revolution in relation to education were vast and set to be accomplished within fifteen years from their inception, covering the following: eradication of illiteracy, universalization of primary education, and provision of nurseries, kindergartens, secondary schools and college education[44]. To this end a wide range of different systems was set up: state-run and community-run schools, education for adults and for children, full-time and part-time schooling and work-study schools, free and tuition-based. One notable development within this massification of education was the introduction of quality-oriented key point schools, as a reaction to the general poor quality of education at the time. These selected elite schools were to guarantee quality education by organizing stringent selection procedures based on highly competitive examinations. According to Pepper (1996) these quality schools were soon institutionalized at every level - from kindergarten to university – and emerged to dominate the Chinese schooling system between 1959 and 1966. As they became the main source of college students and because admission to college was considered the ultimate symbol of success, the life of most of its

[44] Within three years more than 1000 new higher education institutes were established (from 229 in 1957 to 1289 in 1960). However due to poor quality the Ministry of Education reduced the number of institutions again to 407 in 1963 (Min, 1997).

pupils revolved around passing the college entrance examinations. For the masses and rural youth, the Party organized irregular alternatives, such as agricultural work-study schools and schools privately managed by local people (*minban*). The Chinese citizens, however, rejected these alternatives as inferior forms of education.[45] While at first the key point schools were mostly populated by white-collar children who could benefit from their parents' social and cultural capital, Pepper shows that the revolutionary cadre parents and the new CCP elite alike began to value intellectual elite lifestyles and thus soon joined the white-collar families in these institutions. According to the same author, peasant and worker youth could consider themselves lucky when they managed to graduate from a *minban* junior middle school. Success was equated with education, in particular with key schools and college; "failure meant a life of labour" (Pepper, 1996, p. 349).[46]

In 1966 education changed dramatically when Chairman Mao launched his well-known Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution with the aim of decontaminating the Communist Party from hidden 'capitalists' and 'antisocialists', of reanimating revolutionary values, and lastly of freeing the educational system from its elitist stance (Pepper, 1996; Pletcher, 2011). Concerning the last objective, Pepper remarks that the Cultural Revolution is often denoted as "the education revolution" (1996). However, according to Min it "set China's socioeconomic and scientific development back about twenty years" (1997, p. 37). In order to fulfil his dream of a genuine class struggle, Mao turned to the vehicle of mass mobilization, which would have far-reaching consequences that lasted for decades. All over the country millions of Chinese university and high-school students gathered in paramilitary units, called the Red Guards, and started attacking so-called "cow-ghosts and snake-spirits (*niugui sheshen*)"[47]. The first 'class enemies' to be targeted were leadership cadres and educational authorities. Both were blamed for taking the capitalist road, for their perpetuation of the traditional bourgeois education system and for discriminating against proletarians (Pepper, 1996). In many instances, students used the political struggle to settle old and existing scores with teachers (Pepper, 1996). Shortly thereafter however, as Pepper writes, targets became almost all-inclusive and could thus be found everywhere. They were expanded to include "bad-class"

[45] Various authors nevertheless refer to the survival or re-emergence of *minban* education in China. For more information on the topic: Wang Yin (2010), *Managing Institutions: Survival of Minban Secondary schools in Mainland China* (URL: http://lbms03.cityu.edu.hk/theses/abt/phd-ss-b39476467a.pdf)
[46] Peppers describes this double-movement as "walking on two legs" (1996, p. 303)
[47] In traditional culture "cow-ghosts and snake-spirits" were considered evil spirits disguised in human forms. The only way to conquer them was by removing their disguise and confronting the demons from within (Pepper, 1996).

students, intellectuals, people who were thought to harbour rightist sympathies, families with relatives abroad, people who had contact with westerners in the past, etc. At various degrees of severity, all of these 'enemies' were subjected to house searches, public accusation meetings and self-criticism, and physical and emotional violence, or they were sent to the countryside or prison camps to become re-educated (Vos, de & Zhang, 2012). Schools were either transformed into forums for political struggle, or were closed altogether. For more than four years universities and colleges were not allowed to enrol students (Min, 1997; Yuan, 2014). For a great number of the Chinese population, it was a time represented by chaos and fear.

In 1968 schools slowly began to reopen. As shown by Pletcher (2011) many radical measures had been taken to render the education system less elitist. The number of study years was cut back and the authority of teachers was strongly reduced. In addition the curriculum largely consisted of vocational training and study of politics (cf. part-work, part-study schools). Millions of youngsters were sent to the countryside – some across long distances - to learn from the poor and the peasants. All pupils were forced to participate in manual labour for a number of years before entering university. Admission to the latter was no longer based on results from competitive exams but rather on recommendations from the student's work unit. By the mid-1970s the Cultural Revolution had passed its peak, though there were still testimonies about continuing acts of disgracing civilians for 'crimes' such as 'enjoying life' (Vos, de & Zhang, 2012). It was only after the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 that the Party's education policies set forth on a new course. Education reclaimed its former value within society and teachers regained respect as knowledge purveyors. The reforms however also re-installed the highly selective and elitist system of higher education with the resurgence of competitive examinations (Pletcher, 2011). Still, the ghost of the Cultural Revolution had not yet completely disappeared. Almost an entire generation of youngsters had been denied a proper formal education (Pletcher, 2011), and as Zhang Luwei argues, for a student to be admitted at a top university, his/her family's political seal was still ultimately a decisive factor (Vos, de & Zhang, 2012).

After 1978 and the introduction of Deng Xiaoping's new national policies for modernization, China entered another education era once again, in which new elements were introduced but time-honoured practices also reappeared. Building on the former reformations, the objective of nine-year compulsory education and the general elimination of illiteracy were

further clarified (Chai & Cheng, 2011; Pletcher, 2011). At the same time higher education was strongly expanded in order to speed up economic growth (Min, 1997). This led to an expansion of the number of higher educational institutions and enrolment figures (Pletcher, 2011; Xiong, 2007; Zhang, Zhou, & Zhang, 2011)[48]. On the other hand, as a result of the growing need for high-quality education and the inability of the government to provide sufficient supplies, not only were thousands of students sent abroad for advanced studies, also the key school system that had been a topic of the PRC's education policy since 1949 officially reinstated (Chai & Cheng, 2011; Min, 1997; Pletcher, 2011). In 1978, Deng Xiaoping emphasized that "in order to train qualified personnel and uplift the overall level of education, China must concentrate on building key universities, key middle schools, and key primary schools, and improving their educational level and quality" (cited in Chai & Cheng, 2011, p. 133). Similar to earlier wide-sweeping reforms, this decision has had far-reaching and complex consequences, which remain to the present day. Chai and Cheng (2011) provide us with an enumerative description. First, key schools' higher financial government support led to 'school selection' and a stratified school system that largely ignored issues of social inequality. Moreover, as school selection became more widespread, a dual-track system was established by which schools accept those students who pass the entrance examinations, as well as those who do not but can buy themselves in (Chai & Cheng, 2011; Vos, de & Zhang, 2012). As a result school selection fees have become a major source of financial pressure on Chinese parents (Chai & Cheng, 2011; He, Wang, Zhang, & Cui, 2011).[49] Although in the last decade policy makers in China have attempted to erase this practice, in part by rendering compulsory education free of charge, Chai and Cheng (2011) argue that the financial stress faced by parents has not yet disappeared.

As demonstrated above, China's official education has undergone dramatic changes since the creation of the PRC in 1949. Near erasure of illiteracy and massification of schooling, boosted by the later resumption of private education[50] (He et al., 2011; Zhang,

[48] The number of higher education institutions grew from 598 in the year 1978 to 1867 in the year 2006 (Zhang, 2011). Also the number of students enrolled in higher educational institutions has increased substantially. Opinions on the exact level of increase differ nevertheless strongly. Zhang (2011) speaks of 1.08 million students in 1978 and 5.64 million in 2006. Xiong (2007) on the other hand, basing on official figures from the Chinese Ministry of Education, speaks of a gross enrolment rate of 16.60 million in 2006.

[49] According to Chai and Cheng (2011) urban Chinese parents of primary school children spent over 36% of their annual income on school selection. For families with secondary school children, the percentage went up to over 40%.

[50] While by 1960 private education had practically been erased, in 2007 China counted more than 95.000 private educational institutions (Zhang, 2011).

2011) both paved the way for economic growth. Important challenges however remain. While some of these challenges were mentioned previously, there are two more that deserve attention. Zhang (2011) notes that due to significant regional differences in government spending on education, not only internal social inequality remains a thorn in China's side, also the gap this causes with western countries in terms of educational quality of the overall population. Taking into account the increasing importance of credentials for future job opportunities, this is considered by in- and outsiders a quite problematic issue. Secondly, according to various authors (He et al., 2011; Hwang, 2014), vocational and technical training are still largely marginalized in the Chinese education system. Despite increased governmental attention for this type of education due to pressing market needs[51] and unemployment of college graduates, the fiscal budget allocated to it has actually declined. Many argue that this is caused by the low value attributed to vocational and technical education in general contemporary Chinese society (He et al., 2011; Xiong, 2007). Further, virtually all vocational school students are from poor families, mostly rural, reflecting the continuing intertwining of social class and educational opportunities (He et al., 2011; Xiong, 2007).

2. Education in Hong Kong: 1945 – Present day

For the brief historical overview of Hong Kong's educational system I am largely indebted to Anthony Sweeting, who wrote a particularly comprehensive account of the topic: *'Education in Hong Kong, 1941 to 2001. Visions and Revisions'* (2004). This book provided me with most of the data for the following paragraph, unless otherwise indicated. Sweeting shows that, like in China, there have been many different perspectives on education in Hong Kong throughout the years, leading to recurring revisions of policy and practice. Unlike China however, Hong Kong has also been open to international influences, which not only impacted macro-level policy making, but also perspectives and practices of local school staff and students. In general reference to significant intervals in Hong Kong educational eras, Sweeting distinguishes four main periods.

The first time interval covers the years between 1945 and 1964. This post-war period[52]

[51] According to Xiong (2007) Chinese industries are facing significant shortage of highly qualified skilled workers.
[52] From December 1941 to December 1945 Hong Kong was occupied by Japanese troops.

was initially characterised by scarcity of education and increasing population pressures caused by a large influx of refugees from the Mainland.[53] Skeldon describes Hong Kong in the 1950s as "a colonial backwater consisting of hundreds of thousands of refugees with high levels of fertility participating in entrepôt trade" (1994, p. 9). At the grass-roots level of education this led to significant shortages and corrupt practices such as bribery or the expectation that parents should pay "tea-money" to schools in order to secure places in school for children born out of Hong Kong (Sweeting, 2004). Nevertheless, after a number of years the combined effect of reconstruction and expansion led to a conspicuous transformation of the education system. Sweeting writes that while at first Hong Kong education was largely modelled on the British system[54] with English as the main language of instruction, it gradually evolved to "a type of applied decolonization" and "self-sufficient, home-bred and home-grown arrangements" as far as its education policy was concerned. This was evidenced by the immense expansion of schooling provision by the Hong Kong government[55] (at primary and subsequently also at secondary school level), as well as by the growth (in size and in recognition) of the vernacular language stream of schooling. In 1963 for example the Chinese University of Hong Kong was inaugurated, representing the first possibility for Hong Kong youth to follow higher education in Chinese, rather than in English. However, as Sweeting shows, the demand for higher education was still relatively scarce at the time. As a result of the expanding industrialisation of Hong Kong there was a rising demand for skilled technical workers, which led an increase in technical education. Between 1960 and 1964 there was also a short experiment to establish vocational secondary schools, called 'secondary modern schools'.[56] These offered an alternative to the largely academic 'grammar-schools' and were directed at the less-academically inclined students. However, as these schools were generally ill-equipped with both financial and human resources, as was the case in the PRC, they were soon labelled by the Hong Kong people as a "refuge for failing students and poor teachers" (Sweeting, 2004)[57]. As a result, the 'secondary modern schools' only lasted for four years. It would take until the 1970s and more so the 1980s for the vocational track to attain renewed attention by the Hong Kong government and citizens. In general, vocational

[53] Hong Kong is predominantly made up of immigrants. Between 1881 and 1981 it population grew from 111.462 inhabitants to 4.98 million, with most of the population influx consisting of migrants from Mainland China (Lin, 2003).
[54] During the 1960s the UK introduced a comprehensive education system, which thereafter had severe impact on the development of the education system in Hong Kong.
[55] Private education was no also fully being recognized by the Hong Kong government.
[56] This followed the British policy and the Butler Act of 1944, which stipulated a tripartite educational system in secondary education: grammar, technical and modern.
[57] Hong Kong was thereby not an isolated case. The same phenomenon could be observed in the UK.

education has what could be deemed a chequered history in Hong Kong.

The second period in Sweeting's timetable consists of the years between 1965 and 1984 and was significant in the socio-economic and educational development of Hong Kong. Sweeting writes that during this historical epoch Hong Kong was able to define and strengthen its identity, partly as a result of a changing population profile from predominantly refugee to predominantly locally-born. It was also a period in which the economy grew and was further diversified, leading to an expansion and sophistication of the manufacturing industry, as well as to the development of a tertiary sector. According to Skeldon (1994) education has played a major role in the transition from entrepôt trade to a modern service economy by the early 1990s as it provided an educated but low-cost labour force. For the first time a genuine long-term education policy was developed by the Hong Kong government with a conscious effort to move away from a selective and elitist education system - characterised by Grant Schools that mostly provided Western education in European languages - to mass access to schooling and the universalization of primary education. The latter was officially achieved in 1971. Whilst in the early 1970s only one-third of students completing six years of primary education were able to obtain a place in secondary schools (Waters, 2006), in 1978, universal junior secondary education was introduced, which in turn had implications for the further expansion of senior secondary education[58]. By 1978 the Hong Kong educational system consisted of six years of primary schooling (compulsory), three years of junior secondary (compulsory), and two years of senior secondary schooling (elective). This general call for mass access did not, however, proceed without problems. Most notably, in public opinion there was much criticism regarding what was perceived to be a decline in the quality of education. The Cultural Revolution in Mainland China inevitably had an influence on many people, including teachers and students, at that time. Especially in 1966 and 1967 this, in combination with homegrown reasons for discontent, caused significant disturbances within Hong Kong.

Between 1985 and 2001[59] several factors, including restraints on population growth, a

[58] Skeldon (1994) writes that by 1991 almost 60 % of Hong Kong youngsters were proceeding to advanced levels of secondary education.

[59] Hereby I combine two periods of Sweeting's division. Between 1980-2000 the Hong Kong educational system was organized as followed: 3 years of kindergarten (voluntary), 6 years of primary (compulsory), 3 years of secondary (compulsory), 2 years of senior secondary (selective), 2 years of Matriculation course (selective, performance based), variable number of years of tertiary education

decreasing number of people under the age of twenty-five, and oppression from pressure groups moved the attention away from quantity and towards quality of education. At the same time, the implementation of a Joint Declaration by China and the UK in 1984 guaranteed continuity in the operation of Hong Kong's educational system as separate from Mainland China, which spurred the need for long-term planning. However, due to the looming resumption of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong, many young and well-qualified people, including teachers and new graduates, left the country for the West. From 1987 onwards this outflow primed increasing public debate on the possible consequences of a brain drain. An additional subject of discussion was the need for mother tongue education. Sweetings writes that as part of its postcolonial aspirations, the Hong Kong government wished to focus more on civic education, Putonghua, and Chinese history. Although a majority of secondary schools were willing to switch to Chinese medium of instruction (CMI) after the handover in 1997, Sweetings argues that teachers often kept using a mix of both languages and that parents demonstrated a continued preference for English-medium schools, as these were being identified as quality schools. Between 1997 and the present day, various institutes eventually decided to return to English medium of instruction (EMI).[60]

Since 2012, the Hong Kong educational system includes nine years of compulsory education and is organized as follows: three years of kindergarten (voluntary), six years of primary (compulsory), three years of junior secondary education (compulsory), three years of senior secondary (elective) and tertiary education (elective).[61] Recent measures taken by the Hong Kong government, including the removal of fees and a series of public exams in senior secondary schools should facilitate a larger number of students to receive twelve years of education than in the past.[62] Although Hong Kong policy makers have tried to render their education system less elitist and less exam-oriented, the extent to which they succeed is still up for debate. Similar to the case in China, in practice a great number of examinations remain, as for instance those in Primary 5 and 6 that are decisive in the allocation of pupils to secondary schools. In addition, parallel to government and subsidized schools, there is also an increasing number of private schools where admission is officially decided by academic merit.[63]

[60] In 2013, about one fourth of the total number of secondary schools were EMI (http://www.itseducation.asia/education-system.htm)
[61] Source: http://www.itseducation.asia/education-system.htm
[62] Source: http://www.itseducation.asia/education-system.htm
[63] Source: http://www.itseducation.asia/education-system.htm

With regard to higher education, Lee and Cheung (1992) demonstrated that the proportion of working class children among Hong Kong university students has grown significantly over the years, which according to them, reveals the role of education in social mobility (Waters, 2006). However, they also note that in addition to this group of students, an even larger number of middle-class youngsters are enrolled at overseas universities. Waters (2006) argues that educational opportunities in Hong Kong are increasingly dependent on spatial mobility, which in its turn is largely subject to social status. In line with Bourdieu's accounts on the effects of democratization of education in France, she states that as educational opportunities have expanded for all social groups in Hong Kong, middle class parents now tend to distinguish themselves by searching for another type of cultural capital that is considered scarcer and thus more valuable. This form of capital is found by gaining overseas university credentials (Ong, 1996; Waters, 2006). Waters writes that these "new geographies of cultural capital, social reproduction and exclusion in local and transnational contexts" only lead to the perpetuation of already existing social inequalities and class structure and that the entire process is being strongly fuelled by the media who place emphasis on the shortcomings of the local educational system and subsequently, local employers' preference for overseas graduates (2006, p. 189).

3. Meritocracy and competition

3.1. Examinations as symbols of social mobility

Various authors denote the concept of competitiveness as one of the hallmarks of both China's and Hong Kong's current economic and educational systems (Hsu & Wu, 2014; Putten, van der, 2008; Vos, de & Zhang, 2012; Watkins, 2009). They argue that fluctuating unemployment rates have encouraged competition for jobs on the labour market and that within this realm educational credentials are increasingly considered imperative in attaining competitive value. Waters (2006) and Hwang (2014) in turn refer to the democratization of education and the consequent devaluation of senior high school diplomas, extending to university credentials, which according to the authors have led to new ways for social classes to distinguish themselves from one another. Academic selection or selective allocation of

places in top schools and universities through official exams is certainly one of the means to that end. Within such a system, students are being sorted into different schools and universities according to their scores on high-stakes entrance examinations. This has thus rendered the competition for quality education extremely intense and the general perception of contemporary Confucian Asian regions has become characterised by being "certificate driven" [64] and exam-oriented. Indeed, other research reveals that high educational qualifications are highly valued by Chinese families and are believed to result in better professional opportunities and greater incomes (Chai & Cheng, 2011; Dronkers & Heus, 2010). This, however, is not a new phenomenon within the Chinese community at large.

The earliest 'Key School System' in China and the Grant Schools in Hong Kong, to which I referred in previous sections, can be identified as embodiments of such fundamental education- and exam-oriented ideology. However, according to Yen (2014) and Dronkers & Heus (2010), roots can be traced back to the pre-Qin meritocratic ladder structure. Yen (2014) supports this hypothesis with an analysis of the texts of ancient Chinese philosophers from the era of the Chou-empire (771-221 BC), including Confucius and his disciples. In those texts Yen finds that pre-Qin philosophers installed a social ladder hierarchy in society that was not based on a person's inherited status, as was the case in European feudalism, but instead on self-achieved merits in education. In theory, the sole criteria for achieving a high social position were individual capacity, competence and perseverance (Hwang, 2014). This means that in theory in ancient Chinese empires every man could achieve upward mobility – and the associated political power, material wealth and social prestige – if he was able to pass the renowned imperial exams (Xiong, 2007; Yen, 2014). According to Yen, those people who devoted themselves to the competitive battle for excellence in education were often motivated by the desire to bring glory to their lineage and community. Although this pathway to success was arduous, and some even argue that it mainly generated class reproduction as people from wealthy backgrounds undoubtedly had more possibilities to spend time on study of canonical texts (Elman, 1991, in Yen, 2014) the system in and of itself did encourage social mobility. This meritocratic political ideal, so Yen argues, has made a radical mark upon Chinese culture. He writes: "Many of the cultural aspects of Chinese learning, such as moral perfectibility, exerting effort to overcome hardships, and harbouring an insatiable desire to succeed, can find their roots in the political economy of Chinese education" (Yen, 2014, p.

[64] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Hong_Kong

185).

Dronkers & Heus (2010) likewise argue that the high value of learning within Chinese culture is enshrined in Confucianism and thus much more time-honoured than in other societies. To some part their opinion is founded on an analysis put forward by Max Weber in 1951. In a separate chapter on the literati, Weber wrote:

> For twelve centuries social rank in China has been determined by qualification for office than by wealth. This qualification, in turn, had been determined by education, and especially by examinations. China has made literary education the yardstick of social prestige in the most exclusive fashion, far more exclusively than did Europe during the period of the humanists (Dronkers & Heus, 2010, p. 3).

Of course, the desire for upward social mobility is by no means unique to the Chinese. However, the ages-old perceived *feasibility* of it might partly explain the modern revitalization of the exam-oriented education system in China and Hong Kong and the fierce competition that has developed as a result. Various other authors have made similar assumptions on this topic (Hwang, 2014; Kipnis, 2011; Xiong, 2007; Yen, 2014; Zhang, 2011). While Hwang (2014) sees clear similarities between the roles played by the traditional imperial examination system and the current Civil Examination System, others make links with the current high-pressure entrance examinations at Chinese universities. Van der Putten writes, in a decidedly denouncing tone:

> A hundred years after its abolition the imperial exam is more important than ever. It only has a different name: university entrance exam. Every year in June the most massive elimination race of the planet takes place in China. In 2007 9.5 million students were candidates for merely 5.7 million first-year places. The 'gaokao', literally 'high exam' is a decisive test of the most old-fashioned kind" (Putten, van der, 2008, p. 131)[65].

Watkins, writing about Hong Kong, likewise notes that:

> The role played by competition is consistent with traditional Chinese society in which many people competed against one another in civil service examinations to be selected to coveted government positions. These examinations were seen as a major motivation for learning; and

[65] Personal translation from Dutch

> this traditional emphasis on exams has become characteristic of the Hong Kong education system" (Watkin, 2009, p. 72).

The examination system thus appears to be an ancient-old socio-cultural tradition that to this day continues to spur Chinese parents to invest heavily in children's education.

3.2. The rise of private extra-curricular tuition

In her recent autobiographical book, Zhang Luwei writes about her experiences with the educational system of Wuhan (China) in the beginning of the 1990s:

> From its start the entire system focused on tests and exams. Teachers expected me to help my daughter at home so she could study well along with her classmates. Every night I rehearsed with her the things that she had learned at school that day. […] Only after half a year I discovered that many other parents were hiring private tutors so that their children would get a good score on the final exam. That was the key to enter a good secondary school and later on a good university. Many parents kept this practice a secret to prevent that other parents would do the same. The competitiveness was truly large[66] (Vos, de & Zhang, 2012, p. 290).

While from Zhang's testimony private tuition still appeared to be a largely hidden practice, this was soon about to change. Various scholars argue that the tradition and recent rise of competition in Confucian education also lies at the origin of the growing presence of cram schools or "shadow education" (Dronkers & Heus, 2010) in the Asia-Pacific region. According to Wu (2014) these schools 'have sprouted like bamboo shoots in spring rain' to become standard in conjunction with regular education. Cram schools, or *buxiban* as they are called in the PRC, are after-school educational institutions that aim to enhance children's overall educational performance. According to Hwang (2014) they are supposed to offer remedial teaching for pupils who have difficulties with regular schools' subjects, but in reality many students use them to advance beyond normal school schedules. The final objective of cram schools is to provide youngsters with an admission to top secondary schools and (western) universities, which according to Wu (2014) is clearly reflected in their names. Names such as "Little Harvard" or "Princeton" are widespread (Wu, 2014, p. 117). Their

[66] Personal translation from Dutch

pedagogical methods mainly consist of 'cramming in' large amounts of subject material into children's heads in the shortest time possible and providing pupils with techniques and tips for answering public examination questions. According to Hwang (2014) many Chinese parents regard this kind of after-school tuition as a fundamental family responsibility and investment. As most of these schools are private institutions, Chinese parents often (feel they must) spend heavily on education (Wu, 2014). Hwang writes that according to official statistics, the Taiwanese, for example, spend about one fifth of their income on education, and similar findings have been obtained for China, Hong Kong and Singapore. In addition to cram school education, Chinese primary and secondary children are also involved in other after-school learning activities, such as art, dancing classes, and music and language lessons, amongst others. This leaves children in those countries with little to no time for play.

3.3. Resistance to change

Based on above-mentioned scholarly research, I argue that modern Chinese education, being competitive and exam-oriented rather than student-oriented in nature, has its roots in an ancient meritocratic political past, during which for more than 1300 years education and examinational competition were considered primary pathways for people to improve their social status in society. Although as early as in the 1980s both in- and outsiders publicly criticized this system, and despite various measures taken by the Chinese and Hong Kong governments to rectify the plight of exam-oriented and key-school education, the system has not yet fundamentally changed (Chai & Cheng, 2011; Watkins, 2009). According to Chai and Cheng (2011) this can partly be explained by the fact that most of these education reforms were driven by external administrative power, and not by internal motivations from the masses, aside from recurrent complaints visible in mass media (Watkins, 2009). They argue that Chinese parents are unmistakably still intensively occupied with their children's academic achievements and that the competition for good schools is not decreasing, nor is the use of cram schools. In general, most scholars do not anticipate this preoccupation disappearing any time soon (Hsu, 2014; Hwang, 2014). This raises questions regarding whether competition constitutes a Confucian value and/or norm that forms a central part of the Chinese educational 'habitus'. In his account on Chinese culture and economic performance, Tan (2004) applies a revealing quote from Francis L.K. Hsu (1949) that seems to underpin this perspective. In this quote Hsu points to competition as an important feature of

Chinese culture and its link with ancestor worship, even at the level of the family. Hsu writes,

> Between those whose relation with one another is marked by the authority-submission patterns there cannot be competition. But between those whose relation with one another is marked by equality, there can and is bound to be competition. In a family organization which prescribes that all sons, regardless of age, have equal claims to the ancestral inheritance, that all sons have opportunities to head independent family units, and that every son may become the favourite son of parents and ancestors because of personal achievements, this drive for competition tends to receive additional encouragement. It is responsible for the struggle for more wealth, for large family homes, for more 'advantageous' graveyards, for bigger clan temples, for costlier ceremonials, and for a host of other measures which are calculated to increase the welfare and prestige of the living and of the dead." (Hsu, 1949, cited in Tan, 2004, p. 188-189)

In turn, Fülöp (2005, in Watkins, 2009) argues that most criticisms from the West assume a universal definition of competition, namely that is negatively looked upon as the antithesis of cooperation. However, as Fülöp asserts, competition is understood quite differently in collectivist societies. Watkins (2009), building upon Fülöp's view, states that even though Chinese students might look negatively upon the stress emanating from competition, they nevertheless still endorse competition for its inherent motivational value. They generally do not equate their 'competitors' in the educational realm as 'rivals'. Overall, as Watkins claims, competition is seen "as a positive group experience" in which everyone can improve and cooperation is encouraged (Watkins, 2009, p. 85). In contemporary Chinese society, the acceptance of competition in education is also strongly being enhanced by the neoliberal market philosophy within which competition is considered a central asset.

4. Summary

In this chapter, a brief historical overview was given of the recent history of China's and Hong Kong's educational systems. Although this capsulation does by no means capture the more subtle shifts and distinctions, some key events and features have proven to be of particular relevance for the analysis of this study's empirical data. First of all, it is clear that in both China and Hong extensive and recurring education reforms and revision have taken

place during the past half century as a result of profound political and ideological transitions. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1966), Mao Zedong set out for massification of schooling while at the same time a system of quality-oriented key point schools was installed. Admission to key point schools soon became equated to success, though it was only attainable to a small and elitist section of Chinese society. Between 1966 and 1976, the Great Cultural Proletarian Revolution took place, during which Mao Zedong took radical measures to render the education system less elitist. Higher educated people became subjected to various kinds of persecution, schools were closed down or were transformed into forums of political struggle. For many Chinese citizens, especially those who had been labelled as counter-revolutionary or bourgeois, it was a time of fear and chaos. The long-lasting consequences of this period will become very clear in the narratives of many Chinese families in this research. After 1978 and Deng Xiaoping's new policies for modernization, the Party's education policies set forth on a new course. In order to respond to the needs, the education system needed to be expanded, as well as its overall quality improved. At the same time a resumption took place of the elitist schooling system. Similar to China, the Hong Kong educational system has undergone many transformations by which policy makers have taken a variety of measures in view of universalized and quality education. However, despite efforts to move away from selective and elitist education, a system of grant schools – comparable to the key schools in China – continues to exist. In fact, both systems are highly stratified and characterized by high social inequality. Moreover, despite various governmental attempts to boost vocational and technical education in China and Hong Kong, still low value is attributed to these educational forms, which we will also see reflected in the study track choices made by Chinese families in Flanders. Different from China has been Hong Kong's openness to international influences, especially the British, and its recurrent struggle for the strengthening of its own identity through home-bread educational arrangements.

Competitiveness and exam- and certificate-orientedness are the hallmarks of both China and Hong Kong's education systems. This has roots in tradition and can be traced back to the pre-Qin meritocratic ladder structure by which upward social mobility was seen as the result of individual merit. The meritocratic ideal is enshrined in Confucianism but is now being intensified by increased competition on the labour market and democratization of the education system. Although high educational credentials have always been highly valued in Chinese society, the reinforced meritocratic political economy of Chinese education puts an even stronger pressure on parents and children to invest heavily in education. The fierce

competition for quality education has also generated a rise in private extra-curricular tuition and a growing wish for obtaining overseas educational credentials as a new marker of social difference, which only leads to the perpetuation of the already long-existing social inequalities in education.

Chapter 5

Research methodology

1. Introduction

This chapter delves more deeply into the design and methodology of the research. The basis of the design was shaped by the broader *Bet You!* Project that was the source of the PhD-research at hand. This study comprised of a comparative, longitudinal and mixed-method study of the factors that influence the school careers of youngsters with a migration background in Flanders. In current scholarly literature on methodology, various migration scholars have called for "a move away from grand narrative toward a more careful analysis of the situatedness and positionality of migrants achieved by ethnographic research methods" (Leung, 2003, p. 238). Consequently, data for this PhD-study were obtained mainly through a triangulation of different ethnographic data collection methods including participant observation, semi-structured interviews with pupils, parents, school personnel and key figures from the Chinese community, as well as through a set of supplementary qualitative strategies. The study involved collecting narratives of Chinese immigrant families in Flanders to explore and analyse the relationship between place(s) and 'educational identities' among them (cf. Leung, 2003), as well as the interrelatedness of the latter with the different micro-, meso-, and macrosystems surrounding those families. The fieldwork was conducted from March 2009 to March 2013. Ethnographic data were collected for a total of twenty-six pupils and their nuclear families (21), in three main sites: home, school and places where leisure time is spent. This has lead to unique data that interconnects between the different contexts.

2. Epistemology

2.1. A socio-ecological approach

Parenting approaches, family interactions and subsequent family strategies for education are reliant on the personal characteristics and agency of Chinese parents and children, but also on the impact of wider society. Internationally, as discussed in the

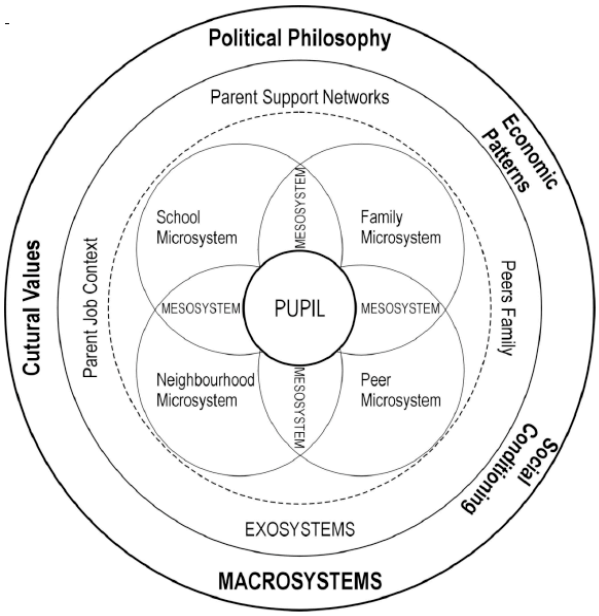
theoretical framework, academic findings clearly demonstrate that individual students never entirely have the development of their school career in their own power. Each student moves within and between different contexts on which he or she often has limited impact (Van der Mooren, 2006). Throughout their educational trajectory, students are influenced in their personal development by perceptions, expectations and actions of parents, siblings, peers and school personnel. These, in turn, are affected by diverse spheres of influence at the meso- and macrolevel, including the broader Flemish educational policies, the structure of the education system, national integration policies, the living area, value-laden cultures, and so on (Ogbu, 1990, 1994, 1996; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Next to it, each youngster also has his or her personal aptitudes and character that operate as influential factors (Van der Mooren, 2006). Such an approach to school success fits in with the socio-ecological framework, in which the human being and his surroundings are considered parts of one and the same entity: the environment. This conceptual framework regards social life as the result of multiple subsystems and multiple levels (Berkovich, 2014). It looks upon individuals as influenced by and in constant interaction with complex material, socio-cultural, economic and political environments (Van der Linden & Klaassen, 1991; Yetunde & Saoirse, 2015) and it emphasizes contextuality, mutual influence and two- (or multiple-) way traffic. Berkovich writes (2014, p. 283):

> "It is commonly agreed that social injustices in education are the result of the operation of multiple systems and levels, which cemented the injustices in the structure of our social arrangements. […] Currently, one may criticize the prevailing social justice discourse in education for being limited in its focus on actions by individuals and schools in an isolated manner, and for not properly recognizing the interdependence between social subsystems and levels. I argue that adopting a socio-ecological viewpoint on social justice efforts in education broadens the focus […]. "

Within the same line of thought, Massey (1990) argued that family members within households often make decisions jointly and that these decisions are influenced by local socioeconomic conditions. Those conditions, in turn, are affected by political and socioeconomic structures at the national and international level and moreover, "these interrelationships are connected to one another over time" (Massey, 1990, p. 5).

There are many representatives of the socio-ecological framework, who each give the approach a personal interpretation (Stevens & Elchardus, 2001; Van der Mooren, 2006). One of the basic theoretical frameworks that inspired the design of the Bet You!-project and that I used as well for organising and analysing the empirical data was Bronfenbrenner's 'Human Ecology Theory' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). Partially developed from his cross-cultural research in the US, Europe, as well as China, developmental psychologist Bronfenbrenner developed a socio-ecological model for analysing the ways in which multiple levels of the environment affect human development and intrafamilial processes. His socio-ecological model transcends the traditional theoretical binary between a constructivist and structuralist approach, giving attention to the mutual influence of individuals/families and 'structures'. Within the model five different environmental systems are brought to the fore that, according to Bronfenbrenner, can be conceived "as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (1979, p. 3); that are interrelated and interact with one another, with each possessing its own norms about role-setting and expected behaviour. According to Bronfenbrenner, the more those different spheres overlap, the smoother the development of the child's progress.

Figure 1.a: The ecological approach – Coatsworth, J.D. (2002)



A strong point to the socio-ecological framework is that it organizes youngsters' social surroundings from a subject-oriented approach. At the heart of the ecological model is the

individual as an active agent, in my case the pupil, with his or her personal characteristics, daily life experiences, personal history and future expectations (Van der Linden & Klaassen, 1991). That individual interacts with a set of *microsystems* that constitute the immediate settings in which he or she operates, including the family, peer group, school environment and neighbourhood. As such the model's most basic unit of analysis is a 'dyad'. After all, as Leach (1967) has shown, the smallest entity within anthropological research "is not an individual, but a relationship between two" (cited in Eriksen, 2001, p. 49). Although I objectively worked with individuals, I wanted to avoid an atomistic focus (Massey, 1990) and therefore mainly used households as major unit of analysis.

The second layer of the model is called the *mesosystem* and consists of the interconnections between the different microsystem environments. An example mentioned by Bronfenbrenner (1986) is that of the interface between family and school. Processes at home, so he states, can influence the child's academic achievement and vice versa, experiences at school might have an impact upon perceptions and behaviour of children and parents in the home-context. Another example is the relation between the school and the peer group (Van der Mooren, 2006). Thirdly, there are the *exosystems*. These systems represent the settings in which the pupil is not directly involved, but that nevertheless affect him or her. Some major exosystems are, for example, the parent's employment and educational situation, parental support networks, the community, mass media & school policy (Van der Mooren, 2006). The next environmental layer mentioned by Bronfenbrenner is the *macrosystem,* i.e. the larger cultural context that generates issues of cultural values and expectations. Public educational policies representing specific collective societal ideologies, by way of example, can have significant effects on pupils' wellbeing and development in school. Also on this level are the cultural meaning systems that are correlated with the religious and ethnic background of a group. They too can have a thorough impact on parental child rearing practices and on pupils' behaviour at home as well as at school.

Finally, Bronfenbrenner speaks of a *chronosystem*. By the introduction of such a system, Bronfenbrenner wanted to account for changes and continuities over time, in the individual as well as in the different environments, and in the relations between these processes. According to Bronfenbrenner, international literature has shown, for instance, that instability within the family (caused by parental absence, family moves, altered employment situations and other factors) negatively impacts pupils' educational outcomes. Moreover, it is

not merely the impact of single events that is worth investigating, as Bronfenbrenner demonstrates, but rather the cumulative effects of successive transitions over time. In the opinion of Bronfenbrenner, three stages of transition are of particular importance (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 735). The first consists of pre-existing intersetting linkages between two settings that influence the transition process and its effects. These may take the form of "information, attitudes, and expectations existing in each setting about the other, or former actual interactions between participants of the two settings". The second is "transition feedback" given to the individual after he or she has entered a specific setting and the effects of such feedback on for example perceptions and behaviour. Finally, Bronfenbrenner focuses on "post-transition changes in relations between settings". He gives the example of parental encouragement or discouragement of their child's contact peer groups with which he or she has engaged. According to the author, such insight in people's "life course" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 733) can be achieved by longitudinal research, but also by gathering retrospective data.

As such, the socio-ecological framework constitutes an appropriate model to help identify the complex range of independent and interacting factors at individual, intrapersonal, organizational and environmental level that might influence the development and negotiation of Chinese family strategies for education. The socio-ecological framework is, however, mainly descriptive rather than explanatory in nature; it is a heuristic model (Stevens & Elchardus, 2001). This means that on the one hand it offers an operationalized meaning to 'the environment' in which individuals live, and on the other hand it creates a framework that allows social researchers to demarcate their study (Stevens & Elchardus, 2001). Therefore, I mainly applied the socio-ecological model as a source of inspiration to look at the four environmental systems or concentric levels and their interactions. Throughout the research and based on the emerging themes during data collection, a more personal interpretation has been given to the different levels. After all, as also noted by Van der Linden & Dijkman and Stevens & Elchardus (2001), the classification of social life into distinct levels remains an analytical construction. In the end, in order to arrive at a rigorous explanation of the development and negotiation of Chinese family strategies for education in Flanders, I mainly call upon the theoretical insights on the factors influencing minority youngsters' educational trajectories, as described in the second chapter of this dissertation, as well as on a social constructionist inspired orientation toward social reality.

2.2. Social constructionism

Social constructionism is related to the epistemological position of interpretevism, which is an approach that emphasizes the subjective meaning of social action (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Social constructionism generally entails an acceptation of one or more of the following key assumptions, as phrased by Burr (2015). First of all, it is commonly critical toward any taken-for-granted understandings of the world (Burr, 2015; Lau-Clayton, 2014). In that sense it challenges the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective and unbiased observation of the world. It bids us to question whether social categories, as for example 'migrant', 'model minority' or 'Chinese', are simply a reflection of naturally occurring distinct types of human beings; as such it is critical toward any universalist or essentialist stance. Many of the social categories we deploy, social constructionists argue, are in fact historically and culturally specific. Blurr (2015) elucidates on that by giving the example of the ways in which 'childhood' and 'parenthood' have been understood throughout the years and at different places. In that way social constructionism wants to avoid a colonialized or ethnocentric understanding and interpretation of indigenous ways of thinking. Blurr (2015) states:

> "…all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. Not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are products of that culture and history, dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time. The particular forms of knowledge that abound in any culture are therefore artefacts of it, and we should not assume that *our* ways of understanding are necessarily any better, in terms of being any nearer the truth, than other ways".

Moreover, according to the social constructionist perspective, knowledge is sustained by social process. The general idea is that people construct knowledge and visions of the world in their daily interactions. These social dealings can produce a variety of possible social constructions of events, by which some patterns of social action are sustained while others get excluded depending on the constructed knowledge and visions. Blurr (2015) exemplifies this by referring to the ways in which the use of alcohol has been regarded upon through time: one can see a drunken person entirely responsible for his/her drunken behaviour and therefore blameworthy, or one can blame the alcohol in itself as an addictive substance and thus look upon the drunken person as a victim of a drug addiction and therefore not responsible for

his/her behaviour. As such, constructions of the world are bound up with power relations that prescribe whom gets to decide upon what is permissible for different people to do. This same line of thought could also be applied to the explanations given for immigrant students' success or failure in education. Important to note is that whereas constructivism, a term often used interchangeably with social constructionism, focuses on individual mental constructions of the world, social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus (Andrews, 2012).

3. Constructing the 'ethnographic field'

3.1. Multi-sited fieldwork

Fieldwork is considered to be the essential hallmark and most defining criterion of socio-cultural anthropology. For long, it involved the expectation of the ethnographer traveling to a distant locale where he/she immersed him/herself thoroughly in the 'exotic' everyday life of a particular set of people for an extended period of time (Amit, 2000; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). This familiar representation of fieldwork, however, has been subjected to increasing critical scrutiny, especially in the face of current mobility, worldwide displacements of people, infinite interconnections and overlapping contexts (Amit, 2000). Within the contemporary world, many anthropologists have argued, the traditional configurations of 'field' and 'fieldwork' ought to be rethought and redefined (Appadurai, 1991, 1996; Gupta & Ferguson 1997; Caputo, 2000)

In line with Appadurai's vision (1996) on cultural dimensions of globalization and his redefinition of space and place in ethnographic inquiry, this study was designed within a multi-sited research field. Outpacing the spatialized notion of a 'field', Appadurai advocates a new style of ethnography that analyses "the nature of a locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized, deterritorialized world" (1991, p. 196). During my fieldwork I did not travel around much geographically, apart from two shorter field trips to China and Canada. As such, at the physical level I mostly engaged in 'anthropology at home'. However, at the mental and imaginative level the research was nonetheless embedded in a multi-sited context. As Robben contended, "multi-sited fieldwork is not the same as fieldwork at multiple sites" (Robben & Sluka, 2007, p. 331). Translocal ethnographers, he states, emphasize multiple connections

rather than multiple geographical sites. According to Marcus, characteristic of multi-sited or "strategically situated (single-site) ethnography", is its attempts:

> To understand something broadly about the system in ethnographic terms as much as it does its local subjects: It is only local circumstantially, thus situating itself in a context or field quite differently than does other single-sited ethnography. […] Within a single site, the crucial issue concerns the detectable system-awareness in the everyday consciousness and actions of subjects' lives. This is not an abstract theoretical awareness such as social scientists might seek, but a sensed, partially articulated awareness of specific other sites and agents to which particular subjects have (not always tangible) relationships (Marcus, 1995, p. 111).

'Strategically situated ethnography' is, as such, compatible with the Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological framework. In line with post-modern research paradigms, my aim was to move away from a single site in order to analyse the circulation of cultural meanings and identities in diffuse time-space (Marcus, 1995). Although I started off the research in two main cities and within two main schools, as will be demonstrated hereafter, I have tried to follow the broader meaning of 'education' and 'learning' throughout different realms. Following the socio-ecological framework, I did not carry out ethnographic research in only the most seemingly obvious sites – in the school- and home- contexts of the pupils – but also in places where after-school time is spent, namely in family's ethnic businesses and in Chinese heritage schools. Moreover, aside from physically 'travelling' to different places, I also wanted to set out from an ethnographic approach that was historically grounded and politically aware (Banks, 1998). Therefore I also took into account the subjects' awareness of and relationships with other 'times' and 'sites' (the broader systems discussed by Bronfenbrenner) such as the exo- and macrosystems. Although in his model, Bronfenbrenner never made mention of a transnational dimension, keeping in mind the two broadest dimensions in his model led me to include transnational connections as well.

3.2. The cities of Antwerp and Ghent as the basic geographic area

My selection of the basic geographic area for research was shaped by the *Bet You!* project's methodology. Within that project two major areas were selected for analysis: the cities of Antwerp and Ghent. Multiple motivational grounds have compelled the project's

team to opt for large urban centres as the main research sites. Worldwide the majority of migrants reside in urban areas. As the largest cities in Flanders, both Antwerp and Ghent include a substantial and diverse immigrant population.[67] Antwerp, an international seaport and historic economic centre, has always attracted different groups of people. Partly as a result of the migratory influx the two cities have a relatively poor population in comparison to the whole of Flanders, as evidenced by higher unemployment rates and lower average incomes. In 2013, Antwerp's population consisted of more than 180 different nationalities, with the Moroccans and Turks representing the largest ethnic minority groups (Roggemans, Cops, & Kolijn, 2013). In Ghent, with a total of 150 different nationalities, the Turks, Bulgarians and Moroccans make up the largest immigrant populations (Roggemans et al., 2013). As a result both cities currently maintain large numbers of minority youth, of whom at least one parent was not born in Belgium: 60% and 40% respectively of the city's total numbers of youngsters in secondary education (Roggemans et al., 2013). Particularly Antwerp possesses a relatively 'large' Chinese community in comparison to other regions in Flanders. There the presence of the Chinese became particularly visible by the end of the 1970s and markedly so during the 1980s and 1990s through a spontaneous development of the city's Chinatown (Pang, 2012; Stad Antwerpen, 2006). The total number of Chinese in Flanders is nonetheless much smaller than that of many other minority groups. In 1997, Ma (2003) estimated the total to be 23.000, while by 2006 Pang spoke of a "conservative estimation" of 25.000.

The often-problematic character of immigrant youngsters' school trajectories is typically considered an urban phenomenon. Indeed, both Antwerp and Ghent possess larger amounts of pupils with limited educational opportunities than the rest of Flanders. They are generally referred to as GOK-pupils[68], based on several indicators such as using another home language than Dutch, having a mother without a certificate of higher secondary education, and growing up in a family that lives of social welfare. In 2008 approximately 37% of secondary school pupils in Antwerp didn't speak Dutch at home and the mothers of 40% of the youngsters had no diploma of higher education (compared to 25% in Flanders) (Roggemans et al., 2013). In Ghent the numbers are respectively 21% and 36%. In line with this, both cities nowadays find themselves confronted with large numbers of pupils with

[67] In 2010 Antwerp had a total population of 483.505 inhabitants, while Ghent counted 243.366 inhabitants (Source: http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistieken/cijfers/bevolking/structuur/woonplaats/groot/)
[68] GOK is an acronym for 'Gelijke OnderwijsKansen', which can be translated as 'equal educational opportunities'

school retardation. According to the City Monitor of 2011, approximately 16% of the pupils within the general track (ASO) in Ghent have at least one year of retardation, compared to 22% in Antwerp (Roggemans et al., 2013). In the technical track (TSO) the number has already risen to 50% in Ghent and 59% in Antwerp. The vocational track (BSO) in Flanders generally comprises the largest number of pupils with school retardation, again with Ghent and Antwerp representing the greatest percentages: respectively 75% and almost 78%. In recent years both cities have developed specific educational policies targeting migrant youth.

3.3. Chinese community schools as vital gateways

My fieldwork and access to the Chinese immigrant families in Flanders occurred through multiple entryways. At the start of the ethnography in March 2009, my co-supervisor, Professor Ching Lin Pang, offered me a vital means of entrance to the Chinese community by introducing me to the director of the Chinese community school of Antwerp. This initial encounter has allowed me to take part in different Chinese language classes aimed at second and third generation Chinese children and youngsters. Through participant observation at the school I mainly got in touch with second-generation adolescents, their families, and school staff, some of who would become my main respondents and informants. In May 2010, through a chain of referencing, I also got in contact with the director of the Chinese community school in Ghent. Also there I met various youngsters and teachers through whom I gained valuable insights into the Chinese family's educational strategies. The fieldwork undertaken in the Chinese community schools in Flanders revealed that such institutions played an important role in the daily lives of many Chinese diasporans. Therefore, when as a result of an interuniversity partnership between 'Université de Montréal' in Quebec (Canada) and KU Leuven I was offered the chance to carry out a limited comparative study on Chinese community schooling in Montréal, I seized the opportunity with both hands. The fieldwork in Montreal ran from the 7th of March to the 26th of April 2013 and took place in two Chinese community schools.

In both Flanders and Canada data were collected through ethnographic methods. In Flanders the fieldwork was done over a period of three years and in Montreal over a period of two months. In both areas, the research methods included repeated individual semi-structured and in-depth interviews with school personnel (Montreal: n=5, Flanders: n=11), pupils

(Montreal: n=10, Flanders: n=26) and parents (Montreal: n=10, Flanders: n=21), as well as ethnographic observation and notetaking during lessons and break times within the selected schools. In Flanders, two additional focus group discussions were held with teachers. Field notes were taken during observations. In the interviews and group discussions, pupils, parents and school staff were asked about their experiences with the Chinese supplementary educational system and about their perceptions of its objectives, benefits and actual contributions to the promotion of general educational attainment. All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. In the Quebec context, interviews were either conducted in French or in English. By contrast, in Flanders interviews were largely conducted in Dutch and a small portion of parents and teachers were interviewed in English. Most of the quotations that are used here derive from the interviews and have thus been translated to English from Dutch, Mandarin, or French.

The central aim of the inquiry was to analyse the role of Chinese community schools in the educational trajectory of Chinese youngsters and in the social positioning of Chinese families in Flanders and Quebec. I examined how Chinese language schools react to the treatment of Chinese immigrants by mainstream society, as well as how these institutions shaped ethnic boundaries. The findings of this comparative study are discussed in the last chapter of this dissertation.

3.4. Ethnographic inquiry at mainstream Flemish schools

In both Antwerp and Ghent I selected one mainstream school with a considerable amount of Chinese pupils for ethnographic research. The selection of the schools was partly based on preliminary fieldwork carried out in the Chinese community schools of the two cities. Using the questionnaire format, I asked the pupils from the community schools what mainstream schools they attended and if they knew of other Chinese youngsters in the same or other schools. This snowball sample method allowed me to gain preliminary insight in the distribution of Chinese pupils across the various educational institutions in each city.

In addition I examined the preliminary results of a broad survey carried out by the *Bet You!* team[69]. The aim of this survey had been to give a general overview of the school careers

[69] The survey was carried out between January and June 2010 in almost all of the secondary schools of three cities (Antwerp, Ghent & Genk) and reached a response rate of 51,5% for regular fulltime education, including a

of pupils in the third and fourth year of secondary education. After these initial steps, I made a list of potential schools for research on the basis of ethnicity-related variables, including ethnic background of parents and grandparents and home language. This clearly showed that in Flanders Chinese students are overrepresented in the general track (ASO) and at the same time are spread out across a large number of schools, as opposed to being concentrated in a particular few. Many of these schools' student populations include only one to three Chinese pupils, a fact that rather limited the school choice. Ultimately I selected two schools for ethnographic research, one in Ghent and one in Antwerp, based on the following parameters: presence of Chinese pupils in the second and third year of secondary education, with additional grades where possible, and willingness of both Chinese pupils and school boards to cooperate in the process of longitudinal research.

The two schools selected were both Catholic institutions that were historically rooted within each city[70]. They offered only the general track and were situated in the heart of the cities. The first school had approximately 200 pupils with over sixty different ethnic backgrounds. The Chinese were the first minority group to arrive in the 1980s at this formerly predominantly white school. At the time of the inquiry, about ten per cent of its total student population consisted of youngsters of Chinese descent, making it the only school in Flanders with such a high concentration of Chinese students. Out of this group I selected nine respondents from the second and third year of secondary education. Eight of them appeared willing to cooperate. Most of them came from lower educated families with roots in Hong Kong, Malaysia or Surinam. The second, and much larger school had approximately 860 pupils with a much more homogenous ethnic makeup. Only forty students had another home language than Dutch. The latter group mainly encompassed youngsters from West-European countries or from Asia. At the outset of the inquiry five Chinese pupils were enrolled in the school, two of which were enrolled in the second secondary grade. They were both selected for the research. Their parents were highly educated and originated from Mainland China. For more detailed information on the personal backgrounds of participants I refer to chapter 6 of this dissertation. In both focal schools I carried out limited, though in-depth ethnographic

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total of 11.015 pupils spread over more than 900 classes in 90 schools. Of the participants 44% were boys, 55% girls. Half of the students were 3th year students and 47% were 4th year students. With regard to ethnic background, the sample consisted of 55% native Belgian pupils and 45% non-Belgian pupils, of which 2% were found to come from Asian backgrounds. In the survey, youngsters were questioned about a wide range of background variables, the characteristics of their school trajectory, ambitions, feelings of involvement and wellbeing.

[70] In October 2009 school 1 has been open for 175 years.

research with the aim of observing and analysing school life along with interaction processes amongst peers, and between pupils and school staff.

3.5. Crucial immersion in Mainland China

At the outset of my doctoral research I had a limited knowledge of the Chinese Diaspora, Chinese immigrants in Flanders, and Chinese culture in a more general sense. In order to gain some basic grounding in China's socio-cultural history and contemporary context I therefore undertook a two-month field trip to different sites in Mainland China, together with my husband. From the 24th of June to the 21st of August 2009 we accompanied four Chinese families from Flanders on their summer visit to their native regions, including Xian, Beijing and Baotou (Chinese Mongolia). All of the four families I had met during the previous months at the Chinese community school of Antwerp.

The first family consisted of a mother (Liling) and her two daughters (Meixiu, 16 - and Eline, 6). In the year 2000, Liling had accompanied her husband to Germany after he had obtained a job as a professor of physics at a German university. Meixiu, the eldest, was six years at that time. Three years later, due to the husband's professional relocation to Flanders, the family had moved to Antwerp. In China, Liling had worked as a secondary school teacher, factory worker and secretary. All her time in Belgium she had unintentionally remained unemployed. When I met Liling in 2009, she had remarried a Belgian man with whom she had her second child. Her ex-husband had relocated to the United States. I met up with her in Beijing. The second family consisted of five members: the parents (Wu Ming and Liu Yi), their eldest son (Wu Guo, 15) and his two younger siblings (12, 13). Both Wu Ming and Liu Yi originated from Baotou (Chinese Mongolia) and had left China in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre (1989) after Liu Yi had obtained a K.U.Leuven scholarship. At the time of the fieldtrip they owned a private travel company in Flanders. The third and fourth family had roots in Beijing. As with the other families the parents of these two families were highly educated. They had left China in the 1980s and 1990s.

Through the fieldtrip I not only wanted to find out more about the country's socio-cultural and educational past and present, but also gain a better insight into my respondents' life course, with particular attention to their migration histories, their transnational

connectivity, connection with the country of origin, and past educational trajectories. With that objective in mind we joined the Chinese parents to sites that had played an important role in their younger lives: the houses and neighbourhoods in which they grew up and the schools in which they were enrolled. By visiting their former classrooms, playgrounds and homes I was able to sense, at least to a certain extent, their emotional and cognitive attachment to those places. Moreover, as they usually took their children with them on those visits, not only did I learn about the parents' experiences and perceptions, but also about those of their offspring. In addition, I accompanied the families on different touristic excursions and on family visits. This not only allowed me to undertake many informal interviews with respondents, but also to have various engaged conversations with close relatives or extended family members, including grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins who were still residing in Mainland China at the time. Taking part in such forms of spontaneous intersubjective dialogue has provided me with additional valuable data, though in a more fragmented and momentary way.

My Chinese immersion took off on the 25th of June in Beijing. On the morning of my second day, Liling and her two daughters greeted me in the lobby of our hotel. She invited my husband and me to join her and her children on their visit to Beihai Park, one of the oldest imperial gardens in China, located in the centre of the bustling city. Together we watched the Beijing citizens engaging in dancing and Chinese martial arts. We made a boat trip and enjoyed tea in the shade of age-old trees. Throughout the day I asked both Liling and her daughters questions that I had prepared in advance, though not in a fixed or linear manner as I also wanted to leave ample room for spontaneous and unanticipated topics to arise from their side. The same strategy I applied at later moments with the other families. In addition to the many semi-structured interviews and informal dialogues, I also conducted eight structured in-depth interviews with the respondents at different locations. The most considerable part of my fieldtrip in China I have spent with the family of Wu Guo. Not only did I meet up with them and their relatives in Baotou, but also in Xian, on different occasions and at different places (their parental home, secondary school, university, tea houses, restaurants, and tourist attractions).

In general, the field trip to China proved instructive in two major ways. First of all it diminished my initial feelings of alienation to the research topic and thus brought me much closer to the people central to this study. Secondly, it allowed me to become more familiar

with a plethora of emic concepts and to take the transnational realm into account in the research.

4. Research sample: selection criteria & procedure

In the process of selecting focal pupils I departed from a number of important criteria that are stated to play a significant role in the school careers of youngsters with a migration background in general, and of Chinese youth in particular. In total I used six variables as criteria for selection: ethnic identity, generational status, study track, school success, age and gender. As in Flanders the number of Chinese pupils in secondary education is rather limited, especially in comparison to other minority youth, I was obliged to handle the initial proposed criteria in a more pragmatic way. I made efforts to ensure an equal spread across typologies, though the distribution of pupils does not make up a representative sample in a statistical sense. As is common in ethnographic research, emphasis is placed on 'qualitas' and on an understanding of unique adaptations to different conditions, rather than on 'quantitas' and generalisation (Erickson, 2012; Wu, 2009). After all, the aim of this dissertation has been to uncover the ways in which different Chinese migrant families within the apparent homogenous group of Chinese immigrants develop and deploy strategies for their children's educational success.

4.1. Ethnic identity

Given the initial research aim, the primary concern was to select pupils of Chinese descent. To define a pupil as 'ethnic Chinese', I combined data on different background variables that I collected from the school's pupil registers in Ghent and Antwerp, group discussions with pupils in schools, and from interviews with pupils in the Chinese schools of Antwerp and Ghent.

As many secondary data sources – such as school registers – do not include

information on ethnic background, I applied the method of onomastic sampling[71]. This entails the use of pupils' surnames as a first proxy to identify Chinese ethnicity (Shah et al., 2010). Next, I looked into schools' registers to gain information on youngsters' and parents' birth country and their claimed nationality. As explained earlier in this study, the overseas Chinese do not constitute a homogeneous diaspora. Instead, they form a large number of fluid groups between which considerable cultural, political and economical boundaries can exist on the basis of the language spoken, country or area of origin, migration period and other factors (Nyíri & Saveliev, 2002; Khoo & Mak, 2003). I therefore had to take into account the potential existence of significant differences between the various groups in the way familial educational strategies were being developed. However, because of the limited source from which students could be drawn, I decided not to pursue a selection based on nation or region of origin, but instead to account for potential internal differences as much as possible in the analysis of the research data. I nevertheless only included pupils from ethnically homogeneous backgrounds. This means that both parents could be identified as Chinese according to the previous selection criteria.

A third and central criterion for selection was centred on the notion of ethnic self-identification, which according to Zimmerman, Zimmerman and Constant consists of "the subjective attachment people have to ethnic communities" (2007, p. 769). Stephan (1992) notes that the notion of 'race' (rather than culture) and the concomitant physical appearance are important concepts that are often used by Westerners to define and label groups as 'the other' (in AhnAllen, Suyemoto, & Carter, 2006) and thus to externally impose ethnic self-identification to others (Phinney, 1990). As a researcher I wanted to avoid ascribing a Chinese identity to pupils merely on the basis of the preceding criteria, i.e. surname, (parents') region of origin and physical appearance. To do justice to the complexity of 'ethnic self-identification' and to account for its inherent contextuality and situational feelings of belonging that can alter over time (Zimmerman et al., 2007; AhnAllen et al., 2006; Phinney 1990) depending on broader processes of in- and out-group boundary making (Barth, 1969), I also had to ask pupils whether they *felt* they were Chinese or not, and whether they *felt* they belonged to an ethnic Chinese reference group, to any degree. Notably, without exception, every student I selected on the basis of the initial criteria did affirm his or her Chinese identity

[71] This method is often used when administrative data are not available, for example in the survey of the European Research Project TIES (The Integration of the European Second Generation) (Crul & Mollenkopf, 2012).

in answer to the latter question.

In sum, whenever in this dissertation I refer to 'Chinese' respondents, it denotes people of Chinese descent, including those from the PRC as well as Hong Kong, Malaysia, and other Chinese Diasporic communities (Lu, 2013), for whom their Chinese origin constituted an important part of their ethnic self-identification.

4.2. Generational status

According to the PISA results of 2006 and 2009 approximately seven per cent of the fifteen year-olds in Flanders belong to the first generation of migrants, eight per cent to the second generation.[72] Both groups score significantly lower on the PISA tests than their indigenous counterparts, with the gap in Flanders being particularly large compared to most other countries, even after controlling for socio-economic status (Jacobs et al., 2009; De Meyer & Warlop, 2010). Basing their case on multiple studies in the U.S., Suárez-Orozco and Todorova (2006) accordingly show that for nearly all immigrant groups in the U.S. the length of residence in the host country is associated with declining school achievement and aspirations, an observation they rightly consider to be alarming. This is in line with segmented assimilation theory, which posits that progress with the second generation is not a matter-of course: people can also undergo a downward mobility (Huijnk, Verkuyten, & Coenders, 2012). In contrast Kazinitz et al. (2008, in Crul & Mollenkopf, 2012) and others (Rumbaut, 2000) state that the second-generation in the U.S. benefits from what they call 'the second generation advantage', referring to the urge of parents and children of the second generation to procure upward social mobility.

In Europe, the situation is similarly variable. According to the PISA study the second generation of most countries outperform the first generation students (De Meyer & Warlop, 2010). The international comparative research program on The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES), in turn, shows that the educational position of second-generation youngsters with roots in Turkey, Morocco or former Yugoslavia is quite problematic in some

[72] I follow the definitions as they can be found in the PISA-study:
- Native student: student born in Belgium, as well as at least one of his/her parents
- First generation: student is not born in Belgium, nor his parents
- Second generation: student is born in Belgium, but not his/her parents

countries (e.g. Germany, Austria, Switzerland), whereas in others the overall picture is rather promising (e.g. France and Sweden). In some European countries the image of the second generation appears to be twofold. In the Netherlands, for example, there is a considerably successful group of Turkish and Moroccan second-generation already present in higher education, but also a large group of pupils that keep lagging behind (Crul, Pasztor, Lelie, Mijs, & Schnell, 2009). Finally, Huijnk et al. (2012) have shown that although the second generation in Holland is doing markedly better than the first, they still show a significant educational disadvantage with respect to the native population.

Global research into the educational position of Chinese immigrants in the West, however, seems to confirm the assumptions of Kasinitz and Rumbaut (cf. supra) about the 'second generation advantage'. In Western countries examined, Asian – particularly Chinese – second generation youngsters have displayed high levels of educational attainment, thereby outranking all other minority groups and even their native counterparts, which has contributed to their reputation as a 'model minority' (Dronkers & Heus, 2010; Levels, Kraaykamp, & Dronkers, 2008; Louie, 2001; Rumbaut, 2000; Song & Wang, 2004). For this research, pupils from the second as well as the first generation were selected as informants. However, a large majority of the pupil respondents were second generation: they were either born in Belgium or had migrated there before the age of six. Out of a total of twenty-six pupils, eighteen were born in Flanders, four in Mainland China, and four in respectively Macau, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. Both groups – first and second generation – were treated as separate entities of analysis when necessary.

4.3. Education form and 'school success'

In the transition from primary to secondary education, based on a certificate dispensed by primary schools, the majority of children just flow into full-time secondary education by which they start the first year of what is generally called 'the A-stream'. Pupils with learning difficulties on the other hand, or those that are more practically oriented, start in the first year of the B-stream. Whereas the A-stream is generally considered the pre-academic stream, its B counterpart can be seen as a more vocational trajectory. During the first two years in both streams students are introduced to a broad spectrum of subjects, after which they need to make a more or less definite study choice. They can then choose between four different education forms: general secondary education (ASO), technical secondary education (TSO),

vocational secondary education (BSO), and secondary education in the arts (KSO). In turn, each education form is subdivided into distinct courses of study.

The initial aim was to equally select an equal number of pupils from each education form. However, preliminary research and an in-depth analysis of data stemming from an extensive survey carried out as part of the *Bet You!* Project revealed that Chinese pupils in Flanders are overrepresented in general secondary education (ASO). At the outset of the inquiry a total of 54% of Asian students were enrolled in ASO; 22.5% in BSO; 19.7% in TSO, and 2% in KSO[73]. Of the total student sample in this research (26), twenty were enrolled in the general track at the outset of the inquiry, four in the technical and two in the vocational track. Although the overrepresentation of pupils in the general track was partly the result of a snowball sampling method, it does reflect in considerable measure the broader reality of the Chinese pupils in the Flemish educational system. They not only exceed all other relevant ethnic minority groups in Flanders, but also their native counterparts. Nonetheless, to do full justice to the real distribution of Chinese pupils across the various tracks, the student sample should have included more pupils from the vocational disciplines. Unfortunately, in practice it proved difficult to engage those particular students for long-term cooperation and commitment, which accounts for their absence from this research project.

In addition and in accordance with the SBO-research design I consciously decided to include 'school success' as another defining variable in the pupil selection. Three sub-variables were used to get an indication of the pupil's success in school: school retardation, change of schools and/or tracks and school grades. Without wanting to stigmatize pupils, I

[73] In comparison: Study track along ethnic lines (Source: SBO-presentation, 4/12/2012, "Oprit 14 – Naar een schooltraject zonder snelheidsbeperkingen. Algemene bevindingen")

Ethnic background	*ASO*	*BSO*	*BuSO*	*DBSO*	*KSO*	*TSO*
Native Belgian	52%	14,5%	2%	0,2%	6,5%	24,8%
Turkish	25,3%	45,5%	3,6%	1,7%	1%	22,9%
Moroccan	22,3%	46,4%	3,7%	0,8%	0,3%	26,8%
Asian	54,2%	22,2%	2%	0%	2%	19,7%
East European	41,1%	23,1%	8,5%	0,6%	5,1%	21,5%
European (other)	35,9%	23%	3,2%	1,4%	10,3%	26,1%
Other or mixed	37%	27,8%	3%	1,4%	4,6%	26,2%

opted for a selection of more- and less-successful pupils. As Kavadias (2013) has shown the totality of gathered insights are only as strong as the weakest link in the entire research chain. Including only the experiences of a selected group of successful youngsters would undeniably have lead to biased research data. In order to provide sound statements on the elements that affect the schooling of young Chinese people, I have therefore compared the experiences and perspectives of both low(er) and high(er) achievers. From the overrepresentation of pupil respondents in the general track, one might assume that a bias was already inevitable from the beginning. However, not all Chinese pupils in general education ran a flawless track as some eventually repeated one or more years or moved into a technical or even vocational track if necessary.

4.4. Age

During the adolescent years, youngsters' personality development goes through important transformations. It constitutes a period in which young people actively search for autonomy and a respected identity. It is a time during which relations with peers gain more importance and parental bonding decreases. Adolescence is also a period of life in which youngsters make important curriculum choices that significantly influence their future career opportunities (Watkins, 2009). Particularly in Flanders the transition from the second to the third year of secondary education is considered by many stakeholders as one of the most defining moments in a pupil's school career. Thus, in order to account for the mechanisms leading to a certain study orientation and its consequences, only pupils from the second or third year of secondary education were selected, regardless of their birth year. They were shadowed throughout the second and a large part of the third grade. In the first year of the study (2009) pupils' ages ranged from fifteen to seventeen. By 2012, their average age was eighteen.

Generally speaking, we know very little about minority youngsters' everyday life contexts and the various spaces they are engaged in, especially not as seen from their own perspectives (Cahill, 2007). In academic research on minority youth and education this remains an important gap. According to Antrop-González (2013) for example, the little truly ethnographic research that has been carried out in Flanders on the school experiences of young Moroccans was conducted mainly by interviewing their parents or teachers, not the

students. Although the latter implies a too narrow conception of the academic reality[74], it has been my aim to overcome such deficiency by departing from the Chinese youngsters' gaze. It is their particular voices that I have wanted to expose, in particular regarding their active attempts and experienced challenges or chances to meet with the demands and expectations of their surroundings. In view of a more complete image these results are being analysed concomitant with parent and peer perspectives (Christenson, Zabriskie, Eggett, & Freeman, 2006).

4.5. Gender

Various authors have mentioned the existence of a gender gap in education (Skelton & Francis, 2011; Rumbaut, 2000; Jacobs et al., 2009b, De Meyer & Warlop, 2010). Amongst others, Skelton & Francis (2011) refer to an on-going debate in many OECD nations' educational policy and media about boys' so-called underachievement. The previous PISA reports indeed indicate that in all countries involved in the study, apparent differences in performance are recorded in favour of girls. Female pupils not only score higher on tests, they also differ substantially in terms of learning attitudes (Jacobs et al., 2009b; De Meyer & Warlop, 2010). Others, in turn, showed that gender also plays a significant role in the construction of future aspirations, with the latter often reflecting traditional gender roles (Antrop-González, Vélez, & Garrett, 2005). Francis and Skelton nevertheless note that many of the explanations given for the 'gender gap' are "premised on unevidenced, and often stereotypical and even misogynist assumptions" (2011, p. 97), as for example the possible consequences of 'the feminization of schooling'. Gendered patterns are never straightforward, so they state, as they are always inflected by many different factors, including social class, ethnicity and teachers' constructions of gender identities and approaches to learning. According to Qin (2009) the attribution of gender roles is an important aspect of Chinese Confucian culture. As the traditional Chinese family is highly patriarchal, during adolescence Chinese immigrant girls tend be monitored more strictly than boys by their parents and therefore girls are more often the "designated carriers of tradition" (Qin, 2009, p. 40). This line of thought is similar to other research on gender differences in ethnic identity formation

[74] See for example the research of anthropologists as Eugène Roosens, Philip Hermans, Johan Leman, and Christiane Timmerman.

and behaviour with minority youngsters (Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006; Yip & Fuligni, 2001, 2002: in Qin, 2009). To account for a potential impact of gender on educational achievement and embodied learning styles, I attempted to include as much female as male respondents. This however turned out to be more difficult than anticipated. As was the case with pupils from the vocational track, boys appeared to be somewhat less inclined to engage in long-term ethnographic research. This resulted in an uneven sex ratio with a total student sample consisting of sixteen girls and eight boys. Nevertheless, throughout the research and especially in the analysis of the research data, I have tried not to lose sight of the gender dimension.

5. Data collection: methods

To gain sufficient descriptive and in-depth data I applied a variety of methods, most of which can be categorized as ethnographic research methods. In order to draw credible conclusions I used a triangulation method by which findings derived from one information source were cross-checked and confirmed by reference to those obtained by the other applied methods (Erickson, 2012). My key modes of data collection included participant observation and semi-structured interviews, with the others delineated in the table below:

Method	***Pupils***	***Parents***	***Peers***	***Teaching staff school***	***Key figures Chinese community***
Participant Observation	Continual	Continual	Continual	Continual	Continual
In-depth interviews	64	24	N/A	7	11
Focus group discussions	N/A	N/A	5	2	1
Narrative vignette	18	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TAT	15	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Facebook	Continual	Continual	Continual	Continual	Continual

Ethnography as a methodology is based explicitly on the recognition that both the content and the quality of the gathered data have as much to do with the researcher as they do with the research participants (Gottlieb, 2006). As was once demonstrated by the Dutch anthropologist Mario Rutten (2007) in his reflexive account of the fieldwork undertaken in the past twenty-five years, engaging oneself in ethnographic research is also to a large extent a personal matter and a matter of engaging in intersubjectivity. Although at the outset of the inquiry as I had been trained in a variety of theoretical paradigms and in the do's and don'ts of ethnographic fieldwork, I still had to become an 'embodied ethnographer'. In a sense, I felt that doing fieldwork was participating in an on-going process of judgement calls. Some cultural anthropologists even referred to ethnographic fieldwork as a matter of on-the-job training and a personal process that one could not be taught in advance (cf. Russell, 1994; Gottlieb, 2006). For a large part, I felt this was true. As in all ethnographies not all circumstances were anticipated, nor were the choices always mine. In line with the tradition of post-modernist writing, this section therefore also includes my personal reflections on and experiences with the process of 'doing ethnography'. I will analyse some of the aspects of my field experiences that generally fall outside of the conventional description of a method (Berreman, 2007).

5.1. Participant observation

Since the pioneering work of anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski[75] at the beginning of the twentieth century, participant observation has become the pivotal method in ethnographic methodology. As Glesne & Peshkin (1992) make clear, this remains true for a variety of reasons. By providing the opportunity to establish a direct relationship with the social actors, participant-observation is a valuable means of acquiring the status of a 'trusted person'. Through becoming part of the social setting it also allows the researcher to experience the unexpected, as well as the expected. In addition, it facilitates the observation of the correspondence between the subject's discourse and behaviour, as well as the meanings attached to it. By conducting participant observation in pupils' homes, schools and communal sites (religious sites, festivities, language schools, etc.) I could discern existing identities from an insider's viewpoint. It is there in particular that contradictions of identity expressions are

[75] Cf. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), *The Sexual Life of Savages* (1932)

visible and where, as Mika Toyota remarks, "the politics of making difference – by class, social networks, gender, generation etc. – within the population labelled as belonging to the same 'ethnic category' can be examined" (Toyota, 2002, p. 191). Finally, participant observation made it possible for me to "analyse the multiple subjectivities of individual migrants, their perceptions of self-image and attitudes to education as an expression and means of asserting new forms of identity fuelled by the dynamics of global capitalism" (Toyota, 2002, p. 191). As was shown by Erickson (2012) participant observation encompasses two primary means of data collection: looking and asking. Thus the actions of the participant observer can range across a continuum from predominantly observation to mostly participation (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Throughout my research I was either 'the observer', 'participant' or I took on both roles simultaneously, depending on the context. Particularly on moments that I took on the participatory role, I made use of unstructured ethnographic interviewing. This, according to Russell (1994, p. 209), being one of the most widely used data collection methods in anthropology, is characterised by "a plan in mind" but also by "a minimum of control over the informant's responses" to generate expressions with the informants that are truly emic in nature and that are given at the respondent's own pace. When possible I made mental as well as written field notes.

5.2. Semi-structured, in-depth and open-ended interviews

"Fieldworkers who ask no questions are sorely tempted
to become their own informants"
(Wolcott 1995:105)

Face-to-face interviewing made up an important part of the research methodology. Following Harry F. Wolcott (1995), I consider interviewing to include "any situation in which a fieldworker is in a position to, and does, attempt to obtain information on a specific topic through even so casual a comment or inducement as, "What you were telling me the other day was really interesting…" or "I didn't have a chance to ask you about this before, but can you tell me a bit more about…" (Wolcott, 1995, p. 106). Interviews in reality differ from one another, both in content and form. Subsequently, in my fieldwork I have chosen to include different types of interview methods. Informal conversations were complemented with casual follow-up interviews and with autobiographical and semi structured, in-depth interviews with

the focal pupils, members of their nuclear family, peers, teachers, and significant key informants within the Chinese community. In the latter type of interviewing I always made use of a list of topics and questions that I wanted to be covered. Throughout the fieldwork however, the written list was continuously adjusted on the basis of the previously gathered data in order to exclude the danger of "framing"[76] (Kavadias, 2013). Moreover, despite the presence of such a list, I tried to be careful not to become reliant solely upon it, but on the contrary, to take every interview as an open-ended conversation with enough space for each of my respondents to introduce new concepts, topics and dynamics at his or her own pace.

The interviews contained multiple functions. They had to corroborate factual information and provide new empirical data (Christiansen, 2003). The set of questions or more informal 'talks' aimed to inquire about respondents' family and migration background, ethnic identification and past and present experiences with, or perceptions and understandings of education. They also aimed at encouraging participants to describe their everyday lives. A third important purpose was to clarify specific aspects which observation alone failed to make entirely comprehensible. All of the semi-structured interviews took place at a location of the respondent's choice. In many cases this was the pupil's home, and at other times the family's business (restaurant, retail store). Observations in these settings unobtrusively added to what I learned from my interviews, as I met siblings, other relatives or friends, allowing a more comprehensive understanding of my participants' social circles (Salaff, Wong, & Greve, 2010). Occasionally interviews were conducted in a library, on the school ground or a coffee bar. They generally lasted from one to three hours. Often during the interviews the respondents and I shared tea with Chinese or Belgian pastry. Most of the interviews were conducted in Dutch, though sometimes I had to use English, not only because some of my respondents had limited knowledge of Dutch, but mainly because my Chinese was not good enough.

In addition to the informal conversations, I had sixty-four in-depth interviews with pupils, twenty-four with parents, and eleven with key figures from the Chinese community and seven with school staff. All of them were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I chose full transcription out of the belief that a true ethnographic analysis of cultural themes could not do without (Russell, 1994). As Spradley (1979) has shown on informants' spoken

[76] The concept of 'framing' refers to the possibility that the selection procedure and context of the research enhances the respondents to 'frame' their narrative in accordance to the concepts used by the researcher.

words in his book '*The ethnographic interview'*: words are symbols that represent an individual's meaning system. Not paying attention to my informants' full discourse would not only have generated a great loss as it contains the danger of an ethnocentric analysis rather than ethnographic one, but it would also have felt disrespectful to my informants.

5.3. An aloof observer?

As stated before, for a long time anthropological fieldwork was primarily associated with an intensive long-term stay in a geographically localised setting (Rutten, 2007), the latter being characterised by both cultural and geographic distance that separates the researcher from the researched group (Peirano, 1998). The idea of anthropology at home has long been considered a 'paradox' because of its move away from the classical search for alterity (Peirano, 1998). Up until the present day, the notion of fieldwork is still linked with the idea of undertaking an immersive and prolonged engagement with the community under research (Kozinets, 2010). Apart from the rather brief fieldtrips to China and Canada, I however did not travel to a 'remote field site', nor did I live among the people I studied. To a large extent I was tied to the research design of the *Bet You!* project. Moreover, having a family of my own, I could not just put my personal life on hold and leave. This means I was always an ethnographer visiting my field rather than living in it. Therefore, participant observation was occasionally more inclusive to interviewing than it was a complement to it, particularly during my fieldwork in Flanders. In view of the validity of my data I sometimes wished I could participate more in the daily lives of my participants and as such downplay "the role of the aloof observer" (Wolcott, 1995, p. 100).

5.4. 'Jotting': a necessary means?

In my first year as an anthropology student at university I remember reading an article of Glesne and Peshkin (1992) about the 'what' and the 'how' of participant observation as a central method in ethnography. It said: "When you begin your role as a participant observer, try to observe *everything* that is happening: make notes and jot down thoughts without narrow, specific regard for your research problem. Study the setting, the participants in the setting, events, acts and people's gestures, and describe it in words and in sketches, using *all*

your senses" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, my emphasis). Honesty leads me to admit that the quote left me sincerely puzzled. What did it mean to 'observe everything' and to 'use all your senses'? Moreover, did I really have to *record* all I saw and sensed? The least one can say is that such premise held the promise of a lot of writing. I was truly left with doubts about what I was supposed to observe and note, and to what level of detail. There were moments in which I was so frantically concerned with these questions, I ended up merely 'observing myself observing' (Cf. Wolcott, 1995). After a while, however, some observations took precedence over others and eventually I could discern recurring themes and patterns in my jottings. What's more: the initial observations and field notes proved to be very insightful, even those that seemed trivial at the beginning.

The pivotal ethical obligation of a researcher is to do no harm. In general, qualitative social research mainly involves the risk of psychological harm, for instance anxiety about embarrassment (Erickson, 2012). The latter can be caused by a variety of factors. For example, the act of writing notes or 'making jottings', as Emerson and his colleagues (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) have called it, occasionally affected the relationship with my respondents. On one specific moment, a teacher of the Chinese heritage school implicitly signalled that watching me observing her classes and writing down notes unremittingly made her feel uneasy. Although I genuinely believed that I had sufficiently informed her on the methods and objectives of the inquiry, I clearly could not prevent her from developing certain feelings of distrust. In the literature various methods are put forth to overcome the problem of excessive jotting (i.e. Emerson et al., 1995). One method that I tried to deploy was to make 'mental notes' or to write down only keywords or central concepts. Then afterwards I would remove myself from the field site and write a more comprehensive account. This 'hidden form' of writing did however not always feel honest vis-à-vis my respondents and also held the danger of forgetting important details. In general it proved a true quest to know how, where and when taking field notes on the site would jeopardize the relationship of trust with my respondents.

5.5. Interviewing: on 'to speak or not to speak'

To interview people is to engage oneself in an act of art making. Marc Pachter, cultural historian and former director of the National Museum of American History, once

beautifully introduced a metaphor for the act of interviewing. He said it is like the creation of 'living self-portraits' by which 'the interviewer acts like the brush in the hand' representing people's life narrative.[77] It is clear: interviewing takes talent (present or absent with birth), skills (which can be taught), creativity, openness, childlike curiosity and naïveté, and critical (self-) reflection. However, as Pachter has also demonstrated, the key point to every good interview is *empathy*. Without empathy it is very easy to fall into the trap of journalistic interrogation, something I have wished to avoid at all means. An empathic interview on the other hand is about making your interviewees *feel* 'that they have a story worth sharing'. It is about *feeling* what your respondents want to say and to be 'an agent of their self-revelation'. And thus: it is also about talking less and listening more (Wolcott, 1995). When transcribing the first interviews, I often caught myself interrupting my interviewees, because I assumed I knew what they were going to say or because the data that they had just given me raised new questions that I wished to ask immediately for fear of forgetting them later on. Resulting from the use of too many 'verbal probes' (Russell, 1994), significant '-emic' information sometimes got lost. As such, in the course of the inquiry I've had to learn to look upon silence in the conversation not as a threat, but as a sign of respect and a means to new opportunities for data gathering.

5.6. Impression management and building report

While an anthropologist is usually evaluated on his or her ability to gain insights "into the back region of the performance of his subjects" (Berreman, 2007, p. 147), any anthropological research is also bound to be confronted with problems of "subjective tailoring" (Chan & Chan, 2011, p. 10). The latter demands tolerance for ambiguity on the part of the researcher. Anthropologist Wolcott (1995) once nicely illustrated this with the following example. "How many children do you have?" he inquired his Ndebele informant in South Africa. "Six, maybe five," answered the man, leaving Wolcott to wonder whether his informant really was ignorant about the number of children he had or whether his ambiguous answer had other calculated reasons (Wolcott, 1995, p. 93). Similarly, on various moments I felt that my respondents were downplaying pieces of information, consciously or unconsciously. On other times I was also given ambiguous answers, which instead of clearing

[77] Marc Pachter: The Art of the Interview. January 2008, Recorded at EG Conference, California. URL: http://www.ted.com/speakers/marc_pachter

things out, primarily tend to veil reality. It is a prevalent psychological phenomenon in interviews that the interviewees are "inclined to their own ways of reconstructing their lives and histories, giving out, as it happens, 'truths', 'half-truths', 'untruths', or a salad of the three" (Chan & Chan, 2011, p. 10). What people tell in an interview is often a reconstruction of memories that people try to bring in line with what happened to them (Salaff et al., 2010). Moreover, people often tend to engage in 'impression management', seeking to control the impressions others receive of them (Berreman, 2007). Berremans writes:

> The impressions that ethnographer and subjects seek to project to one another are, therefore, those felt to be favourable to the accomplishment to their respective goals: the ethnographer seeks access to back-region information; the subjects seek to protect their secrets since these represent a threat to the public image they wish to maintain. Neither can succeed perfectly (Berreman, 2007, p. 147).

Soon during my field observations I came to realize that, in line with cultural Chinese tradition, when holding a conversation, my participants were often just as concerned about the relationship with their interlocutors and the preservation of 'face' (*mianzi*), as with the actual transfer of information. In order to gain access to 'back-region information', I had to assume a role that was considered believable, trustworthy and above all non-threatening in the eyes of my research participants. To a large extent the success of anthropological inquiry is determined by the ability of the researcher to establish meaningful relationships and to build good rapport with participants (Robben & Sluka, 2007). Much has been written in this respect about the insider/outsider dichotomy and its implications for the researcher's credibility and his or her ability to come to empathetic understanding or *verstehen* (Kusow, 2003). The disjuncture between insider and outsider is usually based on categories as ethnic and cultural differences. During my research I was an outsider in at least two ways: as a native Belgian I was an ethnic outsider. In addition, I did not speak Chinese. However, following Kusow (2003) I argue that a researcher's insider/outsider status is not solely determined by his or her fixed identity markers, but also strongly emerges from the ways he or she interacts with the participants. Throughout the fieldwork I have drawn heavily on the role of student who was eager to learn, as this was a role they were familiar with and which they respected. Another useful means to reduce the 'estrangement' from my field site was to incorporate a delineated part of my private life into the fieldwork. For a part this was done by occasionally taking along my own nuclear family to my field sites. My daughter proved to be a valuable

'companion'. Occasionally I took her along to field trips and interviews. In these settings, her presence seemed to facilitate comfort with my parent respondents in sharing personal information related to the education of their children. More specifically, the transition of my personal social status – from a single young woman to a married wife with a baby, later on a toddler – and taking my child with me, has created a kind of openness and recognition that I would not have experienced otherwise. As the research progressed I felt I came to win most of my respondents' confidence. This gradually became clear, for instance, in the increasingly open way my respondents began to shed light on the topic of discrimination and their experiences with mechanisms of exclusion. While initially they all asserted (almost) never to have been confronted with such thing, their later accounts told a quite different story. There is explicit and implicit discrimination against the Chinese in Flanders, both vis-à-vis the first and second generation. In case of direct discrimination Chinese immigrants often choose not to react to the stereotypes or racist statements. In case of discrimination, they try to work even harder to achieve their goal. In general, their response to discrimination is often one of avoidance and sometimes of surpassing the discriminator.

Occasionally not being granted access to the entire truth, at least I was offered a unique path into my respondents' experiences, perceptions, feelings and aspirations. It was then my task to contextualize these 'truths' "within the unique historical contingencies in which they were uttered" (Chan & Chan, 2011, p. 10). Although most handbooks on methodology advise against suggestive questioning, I discovered that from time to time it made up a good way to uncover some of the more sensitive topics. As for many other authors (i.e. Rutten), Russell admits to have used the method of "phased assertion" or "baiting" (Russell, 1994, p. 219) in order to create openness with his respondents. He states that as he learned "a piece of the puzzle from one informant", he used it "with the next informant to get more information" (Russell, 1994, p. 219). While, for example, various pupil respondents had told me about parental use of physical punishment, only one father appeared to be willing to talk to me about it spontaneously. I was however eager to gain more information on the topic, so I decided to employ his narrative towards the other parents, which achieved results. One can reasonably wonder if this technique is ethical. According to Russell (1994) it is, as long as you don't go beyond the ethical imperative in anthropology of not to harm your informants in any way. If, in any case, I would have noticed that my 'baiting' caused distress or mistrust with my informants, I would immediately have put an end to the usage of such technique.

Many anthropologists argue that knowing the language of the respondents is central to the integrity of one's fieldwork and thus constitutes one of the most important tools for conducting effective ethnography (Gottlieb, 2006; Marcus, 1995). Although I was enrolled in Mandarin classes for a period of three years, my knowledge of the Chinese language unfortunately remained too limited to conduct interviews in Chinese. Instead, it merely allowed me to display respect to my informants' linguistic heritage and to exchange basic phrases of politeness. Moreover, several parents spoke no Mandarin, but Cantonese or a specific dialect. This, and the fact that not all the parents were fluid in Dutch or English, may have limited the profundity of some of the interviews. Nevertheless, it was clear that even no matter how modest my level of competence in Chinese was, all attempts were greatly appreciated by my respondents. When not other options were around, I sometimes deployed the adolescents as interpreters. I however tried to keep this method to a minimum, as their impartiality could have significant consequences for the content of the conversations as well as for the relationships of trust between the different parties (Gottlieb, 2006; Hale, 2007). I also wanted to avoid that youngsters got caught in a struggle between competing expectations from the people around them and as such felt the need to distort the words that had been spoken (in whatever direction). In some families this method proved nonetheless a useful incitement to animated discussions between youngsters and parents, and to a more in-depth understanding of the interplay of opposite opinions and perceptions within a specific nuclear household.

5.7. Focus-group-discussions

Linguistic anthropologist, Michael Agar, states that although focus group discussions are an "anathema to many ethnographers" or even "fast junk food that too much of the world takes to be ethnography", such discussions can be very useful as long as they are not applied as stand-alone methods of data-collection (1996, p. 4). Many authors likewise have shown the benefits of including this method within anthropological research (Russell, 1994; Gobo, 2008; Short, 2006). In my fieldwork I have used focus-group-discussions for many purposes: to introduce efficiency into the fieldwork, to elucidate the objectives of my research to my informants, as a means to help interpret the observations and findings identified during the fieldwork, and finally to elaborate further on earlier findings. With an emphasis on open-ended questions, the discussions have yielded text-based data that duplicated and deepened

the information gathered by the participant observation and interviewing, which argues in favour of the validity of the findings (cf. Russell, 1994).

In total I organized eight focus group discussions: five with Chinese peers of the focal pupils, two with teaching staff of the mainstream schools, and one with the teaching staff of a Chinese heritage school. For practical reasons all of the discussions were held on school grounds (mainstream or Chinese schools respectively). As for the semi-structured interviews they were guided by a topic list, were audio taped and thereafter transcribed for analysis.

5.8. Supplementary methods

Alongside the former data collection methods I made use of a variety of supplementary techniques to enhance existing data or to generate information that was not being elicited by the other research methods.

5.8.1. Narrative vignette

The first adjunct data collection technique I applied was 'the narrative vignette'[78]. Vignettes have been proved useful tools in facilitating self-reflection and uncovering subjects' perceptions, opinions and beliefs about a variety of themes, especially potentially sensitive topics (Barter & Renold, 1999; Hughes & Huby, 2004, Spalding & Phillips, 2007; Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney, & Neale, 2010). According to Finch (1987, p. 105) vignettes constitute "short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond" (cited in Spalding & Phillips 2007, p. 954). The vignette employed here was designed by the SBO-team and pictures a fictional school that pays particular attention to ethnic diversity and intercultural learning. The school tries to have a positive impact on the self-image of students and on their attitude towards other cultures and seeks to connect with the different backgrounds of its students by referring to the following elements: home language, teachers' knowledge of and sensibility vis-à-vis minority cultures and their students' country of origin, positive attention and presence of teachers with

[78] Cf. Infra: Annexe I - Vignette

a migration background. Within the vignette the focus is on ethnic diversity, though also other lines of approach are discussed (youth cultures, language use, religious background…). The aim of the vignette was to provoke a discussion on the conceived rightfulness, desirability and necessity of attention for ethnic background in the school, but also to understand how pupils assessed their own school's policy on diversity. Accounting for the indeterminate relationship between beliefs and praxis, the vignette was primarily used as a way of exploring the subjects' perceptions, rather than actual behaviour (Barter & Renold, 1999).

5.8.2. Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

The third supplementary method of analysis consisted of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), a projective technique whose revival has been informed by the "narrative turn" in social sciences (Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006). The test was originally developed by American psychologists Murray and Morgan in the 1930s, but later on numerous anthropologists have used it in ethnographic work (Sheper-Huhghes; Hermans, 1999; Suárez-Orozco, 1994; Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006; Todorova, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2008). One of the most articulate advocates of the application of such test cross-culturally and in socio-cultural anthropology was the Belgian-American psychological anthropologist George A. De Vos, who applied it in his research on Brazilian Youth, Korean family roles, family obligations and achievement in Japan (De Vos, 1997; Boyer, Boyer, & Stein 2013; Suárez-Orozco, 1994). The test itself consists of twenty cards showing ambiguous images of human figures in a variety of settings. The subject is then asked to tell the figure's story to the researcher: What was the pre-event? What is happening now? What are the people in the picture thinking and how do they feel? What will happen next? The aim of the TAT is to elicit and induce personal narratives and meanings from the respondents. The logic behind the test is that the respondent's cultural "ethos" (Suárez-Orozco, 1994), habitual patterns of thought, interests, concerns, desires and affects are reflected in their narratives. Although this kind of testing has fallen somewhat out of favour in ethnographic research, it has proven to be effective especially with regard to certain themes that bear importance in my research, such as aspirations, educational success, interpersonal relations, family obligations, achievement motivation, and parental expectations. According to Suárez-Orozco and Todorova (2006) the test can be a powerful means to supplement participant observation and ethnographic interviewing, as well as a potential tool to transcend the limitations of culturally biased

itemized questionnaires. She adds that it equally implies a useful means to explore emotive subjects in a less threatening way than through direct questioning, especially when dealing with children and adolescents. As for Suárez-Orozco and other ethnographic researchers, I did not use the TAT as a psychodiagnostic tool with pre-existing scoring schemes, but rather as a significant source of narrative data (Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006).

6. Data-analysis

6.1. Recursiveness as a central technique in the analysis

Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, as well as on an extensive study of the literature on possible determinants of school 'success', a tentative list of themes and research questions was developed at the beginning of the inquiry. Without any concepts in mind one doesn't know what to look for and where to look for it (Becker, 1998; Billiet & Waege, 2003). Themes were then ordered into a 'coding tree' and uploaded onto Nvivo 8, a software programme designed for structuring and analysing qualitative data. Although the themes had thus been developed deductively, they were never treated as fixed and on many occasions new themes and questions evolved and emerged during the research. Often reports on cultures and representations of the 'Other' have been criticized as being products of "perceptual and discursive imperialism imposed onto the researched 'Other' (Cheng, 2008, p. 2). Therefore, as the analysis proceeded, the 'coding tree' was constantly being rearranged on the basis of the newly emerging themes and subthemes (Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2006). Repeated topics in my respondents' recounting shed light on their views of education and their sense of identity (Salaff et al., 2010).

Also the actual *meaning* of the used concepts and themes were continuously being redefined in dialogue with the empirical data (Becker, 1998). The concept of 'education' for example, conventionally being defined as something taking place within schools (Becker, 1998), has been widened throughout the research to 'learning' in various areas, such as within the family's business or in leisure time. Such inductiveness is in line with Erickson's statement that in ethnographic research "data analysis and definition are largely a matter of post hoc decision making" in the sense that you start off with a working assertion and then search the entire corpus of data for confirmation or disconfirmation of the same assertion

(Erickson, 2012, p. 1458). Going recursively back and forth between hunches and bodies of information (Erickson, 2012), and treating every concept as an empirical generalization that needed to be tested (Becker, 1998), provided me with valuable, and sometimes unexpected insights. It enabled me to analyse and interpret common patterns, but also discrepant perspectives and behaviours from within and to do justice to the heterogeneity within the research group. There is no claim to universalism in this dissertation. Instead, as Kozinets puts it aptly: it "is grounded in context, is infused with, and imbues local knowledge of the particular and specific" (Kozinets, 2010, p. 59), thereby paying attention to the complexities of the respondents' lived experiences in different social contexts (Qin, 2009).

6.2. The relational dimension of concepts

Finally, from Becker (1998) I learned that concepts or terms describing people are always relational. By this he means that they only acquire meaning in relation to other concepts or terms. Take for example the word 'successful', often used to describe Chinese students worldwide. Realistically, successful students can exist solely by the grace of so-called 'unsuccessful students'. This might sound logical, though scholars and particularly policy makers often seem to ignore this simple fact. In describing ethnic groups for example, they often refer to fixed cultural characteristics. They forget that to a large extent such 'cultures' result from the group's interrelatedness with other groups in society in various environmental spheres (cf. Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1986), in a way that conditions the development, sustainment and redefinition of specific cultural traits (Becker, 1998; Barth, 1969). Denoting the Chinese as 'successful' and 'a model minority' implies that other minority groups are considered less or unsuccessful. Concepts, 'traits' or ascriptions inherently carry in them a moral dimension. Becker (1998) points to the fact that a trait *an sich* and the social importance or meaning attached to it are indeed very different things. The latter is not only historically determined, but is also subject to power relations. As such, the ascription of traits to a group and the meaning attached to them, are always the product of a process, rather than a fixed given. In the analysis of my research data I have tried to take this knowledge into account as much as possible. The use of both a recursive method of analysis, as well as the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner, has proved to be useful tools to that end.

6.3. Citing respondents

In many ethnographies, authors have attempted to give a more prominent place to the voices and perspectives of their informants by introducing interview quotes in their accounts. Many consider putting forward the meaning from an emic perspective a central mark of quality in current anthropological writing. Equally convinced of the value of such narrative style, I decided to fill this dissertation with plenty of literal quotes from respondents. Although in this way I have tried to do justice to the people I studied, an important remark must be added nonetheless. As was shown by Erickson, using interview quotes carries the danger of "masking the editorial hand of the author" (Erickson, 2012, p. 1467). Indeed, every quote present in the report is carefully selected by me as the author and consciously placed in well-considered parts of the account. Although it was never my intention to gloss over specific data or to overstate certain findings, the act of 'writing up' nonetheless left me with much executive power in the construction of the research report (Erickson, 2012). Some scholars tried to overcome this power imbalance by sharing their writings more fully with the people they studied. Because of time limitations, for reasons of efficiency and also partly out of personal anxiety, I only shared my written accounts twice with informants. One person's feedback made it immediately clear to me that quotes, in their written form, have a very different epistemological status than oral comments made directly by the informant to the researcher (cf. Erickson, 2012). Two meaningful remarks made by one of the informants after reading her own literal quotations in my analysis were very telling in that respect: 1/ "Do I really speak that bad?", and 2/ "This is not correct, I didn't say that". From the first remark, and obviously also as a result of the need to translate quotations into English, I learned that editorial paraphrase and re-voicing constitute inevitable and necessary evils in writing down the stories of my respondents. I nevertheless always tried to remain as close to the original phrasing as possible. The second remark calls upon the authorial responsibility of every researcher. Notwithstanding the fact that I had derived the quotation from a literal transcription, my informant still felt I had done her wrong in my analysis and she appeared quite angry about it for a moment. Such an incident shows that a qualitative analysis always involves ensuring that expressions and perspectives are not misunderstood, and that in case of any doubt, it can be a good idea to return to the original subject for clarity.

7. Ethical considerations

Research ethics receive a great deal of attention in social research, especially when children are involved (Alderson & Morrow, 2010). One of the basic principles to show respect to respondents is by obtaining their informed consent. Therefore, at the outset of the research, when I approached parents and children, I made sure that the purpose of the research was elucidated clearly to them in a way that they understood what they were getting involved in. I also explained to them the concept of anonymity. Together, we made the explicit agreement that everything they told me would be treated as personal information. I also promised to keep their identity secret in all public documents. Consequently in the dissertation all personal names have been replaced by pseudonyms. Another important point is that the consent was always understood to be an on-going process (Alderson & Morrow, 2010), which means that the respondents were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

With regard to language, all Chinese words are represented throughout in pinyin, or the Romanized version of Chinese characters. Quotes from interviews with respondents in Dutch were translated into English. I have thereby endeavoured to keep an honest balance between the faithfulness of the translation on the one hand and readability on the other hand.

PART II:

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Chapter 6

Migration and family background of Chinese pupils

In order to shed light on and contextualize the family strategies for education as developed and applied by the Chinese families in this study, an in-depth analysis of their specific migration and family backgrounds is indispensable. Therefore the first part of this chapter provides a more detailed background to the migration histories of the Chinese families involved and highlights what motivated them to consider emigration. Subsequent parts further zoom in on the families' socio-demographic features. They examine the occupational history and position of parents as well as the educational trajectory and status of both parents and pupils. Thereupon a glance is cast on the religious composition and orientation of the Chinese families involved and on the ways in which religion has played a role in their socioeducational integration.

1. Migration background

1.1. Migration background of parents and pupils

Country of birth	Mother (21)	Father (21)	Total parents (42)	Pupil (26)
China	12	7	19	4
Hong Kong	6	7	13	0
Macau	1	1	2	1
Malaysia	1	3	4	0
Surinam	0	1	1	0
UK	0	2	2	1
Germany	0	0	0	1
The Netherlands	0	0	0	1
Belgium	1	0	1	18

As stated previously, the majority of pupil respondents were second generation: they were either born in Belgium or migrated to Belgium before the age of six. Out of a total of

twenty-six pupils, eighteen were born in Flanders, four in Mainland China, and another four in Macau, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands, respectively.

A minority of parents in this research (n=6) migrated from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Surinam in the 1970s as a small child accompanied by their parents or independently as young adults. The majority, however, moved to Flanders in the 1980s (n=11) and 1990s (n=12). They originated either from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Macau or Malaysia. Apart from one mother, all parents belonging to the latter group were young adults – their age ranging between 17 and 22 – at the time of their departure. From the 1980s onwards and particularly since the 1990s, the share of parents hailing from Mainland China has substantially increased.

1.2. Narratives on motives for migration

Globally, a broad variety of explanations exist for migration movements and factors leading to the migration decisions. One of the most widespread approaches in migration research is that of the rational cost-benefit model. This push-pull paradigm posits that migrants are pushed and pulled by various forces - of political, demographic, economic or ideological nature, and either actual or imaginary – and that migrants rationally weigh the costs and benefits of their choice to move (Chan & Chan, 2011; Massey, 1990). Although theoretically useful, the model has been criticized for not accounting for structural variables pertaining to the wider historical context within which the calculation is made (Massey, 1990; Wang, 2005). Therefore, building on a socio-ecological frame, the following empirical analysis succinctly identifies individual variables – such as personal characteristics, ideologies and preferences - as well as family strategies, socio-structural factors and aggregate historic, political, economic and cultural conditions that have determined the migration process of the respondents.

1.2.1. Political rationales

To many Chinese parents in this research and their relatives, the experience of migration was not new. Prior to their journey to Europe, they – or their direct ancestors – had

already been involved in an earlier migratory process. They form part of the large group of diasporic Chinese that fled from Mainland China to Macau, Hong Kong or other neighbouring countries after the establishment of the Communist regime in 1949, and particularly as a result of the Cultural Revolution and its concomitant cruelties in the 1960s and 1970s. Before 1949, Mao Zedong had already classified Chinese people into different social strata based on property ownership (Wang, 2005). After the installation of the New China in 1949, private proprietorship was prohibited for a period of nearly thirty years. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) all adult Chinese were further classified into different categories of 'revolutionaries' versus 'anti-revolutionaries' based on their properties prior to 1949 and their occupations (Wang, 2005). All Chinese children equally received a label according to their (grand)parents' position. In fact, the classification system included three main categories: 1/ lower-class (people that originally came from bourgeois families, including capitalists, landlords, rich peasants, Kuomintang officials, and Rightist intellectuals), 2/ middle-class (people that originally belonged to petty-bourgeois families, including teachers, government office clerks, accountants, bank clerks…), and 3/ upper-class (people that originally came from proletarian families, including blue-collar workers, poor peasants, soldiers, Communist revolutionary cadres,…) (Wang, 2005).

Various parents as well as other informants recalled that during the revolution their families had been labelled by the Communist regime as "black families" or "counterrevolutionaries" because of their financial prosperity and middle-and upper-class social positions in society before 1949. As a result of this ascribed label, their families' had gone through mental and/or physical oppression by the Chinese Red Guards and had their properties confiscated and redistributed. Respondents' recounted that during this era many Chinese families unwillingly had to halt children's formal education. Other respondents testified about relatives being murdered or banished to the countryside to be "socially re-educated". One such respondent, Li Shen, recounted the story of his father, a colonel in the Nationalist Army and son of a rich landlord, who fled to Hong Kong as soon as the Communists came into power. According to Li Shen's family's narrative, after his sudden departure the colonel had lost all contact with his siblings (sixteen in total) and extended family. For more than twenty years, Li Shen's father believed he had no family left in China. It was only by coincidence that, years later, Li Shen himself discovered that some of his relatives were still alive. In 2009, shortly before I met him, he went to find them in Chengdu Province. His father unfortunately died before he was able to receive the good news.

Various other families in this study have expressed similar narratives. According to the sisters Mei-Lan and Amber, their grandparents too went through a difficult time during the Cultural Revolution as a result of being deemed part of the "moneyed class". They decided to migrate to Hong Kong. Again, a similar fate befell the family of Li-Na, Li-Zhi, and Wu Guo.

> Mother of Li-Zhi & Li-Na: In the past, both my grandfathers had been very rich but when Mao came, the communists confiscated all their possessions. In former days, my father had gone to a big city to study at university, but as his parents lost all their possessions and were left with no money, he had to put an end to his studies. You know, during my father's youth, there were a lot, really a lot of control mechanisms in China. You could not even choose your job freely. Although my father had studied at university for some time, he was nonetheless sent to the countryside. During the Mao regime no one who had received a good education was allowed to hold a high position in society. That is why they sent my father to the countryside to work there as a farmer. As soon as he arrived there, he had to obey people with no educational background and he couldn't express a word of critique. You know, it made him completely silenced. He turned into a taciturn man. Yes, because he couldn't say a word. Whenever he tried, he ran the risk of being labelled as a counterrevolutionary, with all the attendant potential consequences. That is why my father decided to go to Macau. There, at least, he had more financial opportunities. In 1979, he moved from Macau to Hong Kong, together with his son. My mother stayed behind in Macau with the other children.

> Mother of Wu Guo: In 1966, I was eleven years old. I remember everything. My entire family consisted of so-called intellectuals. The Communists wanted us to change our minds; we had to go to the barn. In Chinese that means we had to intermingle with the farmers, take on their mind-set and renounce capitalist thoughts. My parents did not have much trouble because they were wise, they did not involve much in politics. But my grandparents, yes, especially my maternal grandfather… Before the foundation of the PRC in '49, he was a men of property from the north of China. He owned various gemstone jewellery stores and a hotel. However, after '49, the government confiscated everything. So he had to become a normal citizen. He could no longer work and was dependent on something like the OCMW social benefit system in Belgium. But he had twelve children to feed! My grandmother died from a cardiac arrest shortly after the confiscation. That's my mother's family. At my father's side, his father and grandfather owned an entire street of houses which they rented out. All the houses were confiscated as well and given to the labourers. My grandfather eventually died of poverty.

> Father of Mei-Lan & Amber: So, the main reason why we migrated from Hong Kong to Europe is because we don't like – uh, my parents don't like China. They had a difficult time there during the Cultural Revolution. My mother thought: "the further we go from China, the better". They really had a difficult time there, really a difficult time!

The aforementioned narratives reveal that China's political turmoil in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s left many families with emotional scars and a 'family script' of resistance to living under Chinese Communism (Salaff et al., 2010; Wang, 2005). Various authors have shown that as a result of these experiences at the end of the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s, when it became palpable that Hong Kong and Macau would be transferred back to the PRC[79], many of these earlier migrants became anxious, anticipating not only the transition's economic consequences, but also fearing the loss of autonomy, acquired privileges, and security of family and children once again (Lam, 1994; Skeldon, 1994). This fear was passed on to the next generation and eventually triggered many Hong Kong families to migrate to the West (Pang, 2003b; Salaff et al., 2010). Several parents in this research were able to recount vivid and detailed narratives about their family's hardship during the Cultural Revolution era, even if they themselves had been too young to consciously remember the events or had simply not been present at the time.

The emigration of these families should thus be understood as a broader household strategy for family sustenance and improvement, which was prompted by a broader family remembrance and script (Massey, 1990). Other scholars add more "idiosyncratic cultural explanations", particularly for the flood of migrants from Hong Kong since the 1960s (Salaff et al., 2010, p. 3). They argue that as Hong Kong itself is a place of exile, being predominantly made up of refugees from China, its inhabitants have constructed "a persistent refugee mentality" (Skeldon, 1994, p. 8). Following this line of thought, it appears that Hong Kong citizens at the time were more prone to migration than people from areas with a long-standing and more stable population (Salaff et al., 2010; Skeldon, 1994). If this is true, one can similarly wonder if their offspring – for example, a large part of the second-generation youngsters in this research – display a similar inclination to mobility. This question will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter in which the future aspirations of the youngsters are discussed.

[79] After the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974, the newly established government decided it was going to relinquish all its overseas territories. Already in 1976 Macau was defined as "Chinese territory under Portuguese administration". Ten years later, in 1986, the People's Republic of China and Macao started negotiating about the transfer. Eventually, on the 20th December of 1999, China resumed sovereignty over Macau (http:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macau)

1.2.2. 'Searching for more life' and the importance of social networks

A second recurring theme in respondents' narratives has been the search for employment and enhanced professional opportunities. According to focal pupil Kristina Wu, her parents migrated from Shanghai to Europe in 1995 in order "to make money". In a separate interview her father recounts that the situation in China was not remarkably bad when he left, but that he dreamed of becoming "a big boss". Clearly his ambitions stretched beyond what he felt his country was able to offer him. The same applies to other parents in this research. Although they had never set foot on western soil before, to many young Chinese at the time the West was imagined as a place of "perpetual fascination" (Sun, 2002). The father of Lucas Lee and the mother of Wu Guo, who emigrated from Mainland China in 1993 and 1989 respectively, recall:

> Many of our peers were relocating or longing to relocate to the United States or Europe. We were all searching for *more life*. China's economy was not as advanced as it is today. Many people were talking about Europe and about how wonderful the European countries were. We all believed we could live a fantastic life there. So, that is why I decided to come to Belgium for work.

> In that time, twenty years ago, everybody wanted to go abroad. In China there were not that many opportunities for us; not enough chances to develop our lives. Really, everybody wanted to leave.

Social relationships often played an important role in providing incentive to migrate. In conjunction with this phenomenon, Salaff et al. (2010, p. 8) refer to the role of 'social fields' or the wider structures in which people's social networks are embedded. They argue that people in the same social fields are most likely to imitate each other and thus behave in similar ways. Therefore social fields can easily create a bandwagon effect, also in the act of migration, and especially during anxious political or economic times. An additional element has however spurred the 'bandwagon' to go forward, namely chain migration. For many Chinese migrants, especially for those from working class families, intermediate level-patriarchal kinship ties and relationships with fellow villagers strongly influenced their migration projects (Salaff et al., 2010). The function of migrant social networks in structuring migration decisions has long been recognized by social scientists. Having relatives, friends or fellow community members at a destination country increases the possibility of migration to that particular country, because it reduces both the monetary and psychological costs and risks associated with the move (Massey, 1990; Wang, 2005). Indeed, many respondents in this

study were fuelled by (elder) siblings, uncles/aunts or acquaintances who already resided in Belgium, as their curiosity about the West was sparked through the latter's painting of a general positive picture of European life (Massey, 1990; Rijkschroeff, 1998). For these respondents migration represented "an attractive way of overcoming relative deprivation" (Massey, 1990, p. 13). The narratives of some reveal that they arrived in Belgium as tourists, planned to take a closer look to the ins and outs of Flemish life, but that they had already made the decision to stay if the experience was to be a good one. For some this became possible through the Belgian amnesty policy in the year 2000[80]. Many were induced by relatives or acquaintances to relocate to Europe and take a job in their family's restaurant business or retail stores, thereby creating a clear settler migration pattern and a certain institutionalization of migration.

> Mother of Sophie & Julie: "My brother moved to Belgium in 1977. He had a restaurant here and was in need for help. I had just finished secondary school and so I came here. It was my choice to come. If I had said 'no', my parents would not have opposed to it. I was eighteen then and I was really curious. Belgium was something completely new. That is why I decided to comply with my brother's request.

> Mr. Cheung: "My uncle lived in Holland and was searching for someone to assist him in his restaurant. At that time it was not so easy to find Chinese personnel, because there were not that many Chinese living there. That is why he asked his brother in Hong Kong to send one of his sons to Holland. My father sent me."

This pattern of chain migration carried with it a significant gender dimension. As is the case for many other diasporic women worldwide (Ryan & Sales, 2013), the female respondents in this study – especially the earlier Chinese female immigrants – had migrated in the wake of a father or husband's migration. The above-mentioned quotes reveal that men often were the pioneering migrants in the family. A few years later – after they had acquired a residence permit and established a secure financial base – their spouses and children joined them through the principle of family reunification (Pang, 2003b). Other Chinese women in this research joined their boyfriends or husband when the latter received a chance to work or study in Europe. It seems that only from the second half of the 1980s onwards Chinese women gradually started to become lead migrants in order to pursue personal self-fulfilment or professional and educational dreams. Although many women had followed or joined their

[80] In 2000 the Belgian government offered the opportunity to illegal immigrants who had resided in the country for a minimum of five years to apply for regularization. If successful, they were granted papers that allowed them to stay legally in Belgium.

husbands or fathers, their stories also revealed complex negotiation over the decision to migrate as well as power dynamics within the family. As echoed in Ryan and Sales' work on family decision-making strategies of Polish migrants in London, the narratives of the Chinese women in this study also highlighted considerations about their own and especially also their children's long-term future, as well as practical decisions related to the care of offspring and the elderly.

1.2.3. Migration as an educational strategy

1.2.3.1. Parents as students

A third set of motives for migration to Europe revolved around education. Four parents and several other informants in this research came to Europe as part of their personal study track. They formed part of the new wave of students who went to the West after the onset of the Chinese economic reforms in the late 1970s. For various informants, for instance teachers from the Chinese heritage schools in Ghent and Antwerp, their departure in the 1990s resulted largely from a more relaxed policy of the Chinese government with regard to students wanting to go abroad on their own initiative and expense (Li, 2002; Cheng, 2002). The focal parents in this research on the other hand - Lou's parents, Wu Guo's mother and Chen Gao's father – had all been selected by the Chinese government and were granted scholarships to study at universities abroad. They recall that due to the Chinese governments' anxiety about a potential brain drain, in order to obtain such a scholarship you needed to have excellent grades and also 'prove' your intention to return to China afterwards. Such 'proof' was demonstrated by applicants' disposal of substantial financial means, an already existing valid Chinese diploma or job to which they could return. However, like many of their companions, the did not return to China but instead remained in Europe.

> Mother of Wu Guo: I applied for a scholarship at the university and they accepted me. I could go abroad to study for two years. I was really lucky. My parents were very happy, really very happy. They supported me to go abroad and to never come back. But that's twenty years ago [She left in 1989 shortly after the Tiananmen Massacre]. At that time the situation in China was really bad. Everybody wanted to study abroad, everybody."
>
> Anthropologist: Was it easy to obtain a visa for Belgium?

Mother: No, very difficult! When you had a scholarship, then it was very easy. But when you were a private student and needed to support yourself, then you needed to find some guardian in Belgium. The Belgian people had to give some kind of guarantee. But even with such a guarantee, it was still difficult to go abroad. You were still not a 100 per cent sure whether you would be granted a visa. It mainly depended on your background, diploma and everything. I was an engineer and I had a fixed income in China, so it looked like I really wanted to study abroad instead of emigrating for other reasons. You know, most people in China only had a certificate of primary school or lower secondary education. When they stated that they wanted to go to a foreign university, the government did not believe them. They said: "That is impossible, you won't study."

Anthropologist: So, the Chinese government assumed that you would come back after you finished your studies in Europe?

Mother: Yes, that's what they thought. But in that period most people did not come back. They stayed abroad. If it was not in Belgium, they would move to America or somewhere else.

Anthropologist: Do you know people that went back to China?

Mother: No, not in those days. Now, the situation has changed.

The narratives of some respondents give away that they have been subject to what scholars denote as the "fever of studying abroad", or the rush overseas of Chinese university students during the 1980s and 1990s (Cheng, 2002; Wu, 2011; Zhao, 1996). Their stories, however, also reveal that behind such fever, also other motives lay hidden. The Tiananmen Square massacre played an important role, if not in the departure of Wu Guo's parents then certainly in their decision to apply for permanent residency in Belgium. In fact, for various Chinese immigrants, Tiananmen has offered the opportunity to legally settle in Belgium. Although his wife had received a scholarship to study in Belgium, Wu Guo said he was still quite resistant to the idea of leaving China, even if it were only temporarily. But then, shortly before his wife left, they both became unwilling bystanders of the Tiananmen bloodshed and subsequent developments and were left with a feeling of anger and general disillusionment, prompting them both to prepare for a permanent departure instead. The father explained:

At that momen,t I didn't really want to go abroad, because in 1988 our lives had already gotten a little better and easier. I had a good job in a big city; I felt lucky. Then suddenly, as you know, in '89 horrible things happened on Tiananmen Square. […] I saw what happened with my own eyes, because occasionally I was offering some help to the students. Yes, in my heart I supported them. But suddenly the situation changed drastically! It was as if I was thrown back to my childhood years, you know [Here he refers to the Cultural Revolution era]. Before Tiananmen I thought: "There is hope, we have new hope, we can go out". You know, in the beginning, I did not really want to go abroad, but after that I told my wife: "Ok, we can go, to any country in the world, let's go, I don't want to stay here!" I felt really angry. I felt angry with the police and the army taking over the city. I remember sitting on the

> train and I just wanted to throw my bottle to one of them. […] So, my wife left in 1989. I didn't leave with her, because at that time only she had been granted a visa. I hadn't applied for one yet. Only after that, I said: "Ok, yes, we go". I did not apply for a study visa, but I told them I wanted to visit my wife. It was a very difficult situation then, you cannot imagine. If I had said I wanted to go abroad to study, they would not have allowed me to go. It was only because I said that I wanted to visit my wife, that they had no reason to refuse my application. So, I left China in October 1990 and I did not return.

As argued by Ryan & Sales (2013), the decision to migrate or the migration itself are not one-off events that end in settlement, but rather on-going processes that may be re-evaluated over the course of time and for various reasons. Other respondents had similar stories to the one of Wu Guo's father regarding the re-consideration of their migration plan. Chen Gao's father equally attested that long-term emigration had not been his original intention when leaving China as a student.

> It was much more of a coincidence than it was my original goal. The Chinese government had issued five scholarships for Chinese artists who wanted to study abroad. Four of them went to musicians from all over China, the fifth to a Chinese painter. I was one of the musicians to win a scholarship for one year at the Conservatory of Nice in France. After I completed the first year I could apply for another year, and thereafter, another year. When I left China it was not at all my aim to emigrate and to remain in Europe. I had really just come to study. Nevertheless, at the end of my studies in France, I saw a vacancy for the job of principal clarinettist at the Flemish Opera. I applied for it and to my surprise I won. Now we are twenty-two years later and I am still here [laughs].

1.2.3.2. "For the education of my child"

While in the previous accounts the educational trajectory of parents was central to the family's migration history, in other families the education of children was put forth as the main motive for migration. In chapter 5 I have shown that from the 1980s on, along with economic development, the educational system of China and Hong Kong underwent significant transformations. Building on an ancient past associated with the value of education, as well as a result of growing international competition within the educational market, it has become a very competitive realm in which a lot of pressure is placed not only on students but also on families as a whole. According to Meiying's parents this constituted a major reason for them to migrate to Europe in 1996. Their narratives echo the findings of Aihwa Ong (1996) and Johanna Waters (2006) on the desire of middle-class families in Hong

Kong and Taiwan for their children to acquire overseas academic credentials as a response to anticipated failure in the local education system. In the following interview extract Meiying's mother clearly portrays a sense of fear and pessimism about her child's educational future in the homeland and states somewhat ambiguously that this has been the main reason for them to migrate.

> My husband was working as an electrician in Hong Kong and I was a bookkeeper. There was nothing special at that time. […] We didn't know anything about Belgium. I could hardly find it on the map. The only thing that I knew was that it was part of Europe. However, we had heard a lot of stories from my brother-in-law about the social security system and about the fact that it was a better place for children to study. Even though we didn't know much about the reality of Belgian life, we assumed that our stay would be permanently. In Hong Kong, we didn't own a house. We lived in an apartment that was assigned to us by my employer. So, when we left, we had no choice but to be successful. We never thought: what if we fail?
>
> […]
>
> We actually came to Belgium for Meiying's education. This was our main reason. In Hong Kong, children need to study day and night, but in the end they have not really learned anything. Moreover, in Hong Kong there are many children, but very few schools. Therefore children must fight to get into a good school. Within the Chinese educational system, children also have to cram their heads full of theoretical knowledge, but they are not given the time to incorporate or to process the data. All the time there are tests and exams. In Belgium, the opposite is true. Children here have much more time to process the things that they have learned. In Belgium they grow up in a much calmer environment, with more time for other activities such as school trips and hobbies.

Likewise, in a first interview Ning's mother, Yun, justified her decision to migrate from Guangzhou to Belgium in 2005 on the basis of her son's education, albeit in a distinct way. As for the account of Meying's parents, the initial story of Ning and Yun is quite antithetical to the narratives of the earlier migrants who mostly spoke of economic and political hardship.

> Anthropologist: Previously you talked about the luxury that you had given up through the migration process. How have you dealt with that exactly? Can you tell me something about it?
>
> Yun: Yes. Look, actually I did it all for my son. I wanted to train him in being able to adapt to new environments. I departed from China with that point of view.
>
> Ning: According to my mother, a person with a lot of knowledge not always surpasses someone who possesses great skills. To her, skills are more important than knowledge. My mom always says: "If I had left you in China to continue your luxurious life, you wouldn't have learned anything. You wouldn't

have learned, because you wouldn't have experienced anything". "You should not only witness", so she says, "but also live things yourself".

[…]

Ning: My mother has a theory, her own theory that she always tells me. She says: There are trees. Trees grow. When trees grow, they tend to branch off. However, if you can discover and remove those branches in an early stage, the tree-trunk will grow strong and straight up. If not, your tree-trunk can never be as strong or beautiful.

In a later conversation with Ning and Yun, it however became clear that Yun's migration decision had also been prompted by other underlying motives, which makes the depiction of the exact migration rationales more complex than what one would be inclined to believe at first sight. Although Ning and his mother had lived a materially well-off existence in China, Yun had felt mentally restricted by the 'Chinese way of life'. In a way she had wanted to break out of the limited ideological freedom that Chinese society was willing to offer her. This is also partly why she has opened up to a Belgian man and quite hastily decided to marry him despite facing strong opposition from her family. Apart from that, also her son's wellbeing and her wish to find him a good father appear to have played an important role in her final decision to migrate.

Anthropologist: How did your family react when you decided to move to Belgium?

Yun: They were totally against it! You know, they live quite a luxurious life there, just like we did at the time. They did not understand why I wanted to move to Belgium without knowing any Dutch or English. They were scared that I would not be able to find a job. My sister was very angry. She did not speak to me for months. But… how can I say this? I was really tired of the Chinese lifestyle. I wanted something new. I was tired of doing the same thing everyday. I needed a new challenge. That is why I decided to come anyway. So, I met this Belgian man. He came to China for more than a month. I married him because he appeared to be good with children. He had a disabled daughter of whom he took very good care. He had spent almost all his money to make a medical operation possible for her! I really liked that! So I thought he could be a good father to Yun as well. And I also believed that when he was a good father, he was probably going to be a good husband too. But ok, it turned out differently. Alcohol abuse made him lose all control.

[…]

Ning: Every time we go back to China we have a lot of lunches and diners with friends and family. And <u>every time</u> they talk about the disadvantages of the Communist regime and its restrictions, now and back then. They are really against communism, even though the regime is less strict than before and people now have more chances to talk about it. …My mother did not really experience the Cultural Revolution but her brother and sister were in school by the end of it. They could not study much as half of the time they had to write propagandistic essays.

> Anthropologist: Yun, if you would go back to China, would you feel restricted in your freedom again?
> Yun: Freedom of speech is still much more limited in China than in Belgium. Also typical for the Chinese communist system is the corruption and the negative way in which networks are important. For example, if you get a traffic fine but you have connections within the police system, it's possible to get out of that fine. In Belgium everything functions according to laws, while in China everything works according to your personal connections, *guanxi.*

As such, it appears that Yun's depiction of education as a migration motive is also partly the result of "post-facto rationalization" (Skeldon, 1994). By the latter concept Skeldon refers to the way in which people justify their migration not on the basis of foregoing rationales but more so on what has occurred since their movement. Yun's initial narrative supposedly has also been a conscious or unconscious act of framing or a mental construction to overcome the difficulties that she was undergoing at the time: having been a single mother in China, feeling ideologically restricted within Chinese society, getting remarried to a Belgian man to escape from all that, eventually divorcing again after an unhappy marriage marked by alcohol abuse and violence, living off social welfare in Belgium and not being able to find a job on the regular job market due to language barriers,… However, if her son is educationally successful, then all this hardship has not been in vain. She can even state that it was an act of self-sacrifice for the sake of her son's education and well-being.

In fact, various accounts reflected a recurrent discourse that although staying in the homeland might have been acceptable to the generations that decided to migrate, that this was not the case for their offspring, albeit for very distinct reasons. Following Edward Hardie (1994), an anthropologist who did extensive fieldwork in Hong Kong in the 1990s, I argue that this kind of reasoning builds on an age-old rhetoric of self-sacrifice that is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture and that departs from the belief that older generations need to sacrifice for the benefit of the younger, whom in their turn must bring honour to the family through educational (and other) successes. In this research, suchlike rhetoric seemed to be most prevalent with the Chinese mothers. Without differentiating for gender, Hardie (1994) detected a similar phenomenon with Hong Kong Chinese who applied for visas to migrate. He discovered that they almost never raised education as a topic during initial interviews with migration advisors and consultants. However, he noted, many potential migrants became so strongly impressed by consultants' accounts on the destination countries' comprehensive education systems, that they started citing education as one of the primary reasons for wanting to migrate. This means that eventually they adopted a family-oriented discourse, by which the

educational future of the children was stressed, as well as the notion of self-sacrifice on behalf of the parents.

2. Families' educational status

2.1. Educational position of parents

Highest educational degree	Mother	Father	Total (42)
University/University college	5	4	9
Advanced vocational/technical training	3	3	6
Senior secondary education	8	8	16
Junior secondary education	3	2	5
Primary school	2	4	6

The overall picture of parents' educational attainment is relatively diverse and partly reflects a bell curve pattern. While the majority has completed senior secondary education (16), received some kind of advanced vocational or technical training (6) or became college or university graduates (9), a significant proportion however completed only primary school (6) or junior secondary education (5). Parents belonging to the latter group predominantly come from Mainland China and Malaysia. Those with college or university degrees all originate from Mainland China and migrated to the West for educational reasons after the mid-1980s. While some parents obtained their final academic degree in Europe - at any level - most did so in their country of origin.

Different factors contributed to the recurrent lower educational level of many of these parents, depending greatly on their birth region and time of migration. For those growing up in China in the 1960s and 1970s a major reason has been of political nature. As indicated in the previous chapter, during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) the educational

system of the PRC drastically deteriorated (Thunø, 2008) leaving many young people to withdraw from education altogether. Lei's mother recollects that during that period most of her peers set out to work as studying carried with it the risk of being dispatched to poor and distant rural areas. As a result she only completed primary education. Wu Guo and Chen Gao's parents on the other hand did not drop out of school – they even obtained a university degree - although for them too it proved quite difficult to remain in formal education. They recall that schools were often closed and if they weren't, teachers had been made voiceless. In addition their parents had belonged to the 'wrong class' resulting in a constant fear of being arrested and in a lack of time and energy to be involved much in their children's education. From the late 1970s on, however, these parents recalled, as Deng Xiaoping's various reforms were enacted, the educational system gradually improved. Particularly after Mao's death a thorough structural reorganisation of the educational system yielded revisions of teaching content and methods (Thunø, 2008). While during the Revolution the entire curriculum had strongly been politicized and centred solely on the Revolution and Mao's Little Red Book, gradually the educational horizons were broadened and education as a whole re-gained its initial value within society. Wu Guo's mother commented on the situation:

> When I was in school, we sometimes had practical training in the farm for one month or something. Every school had a farm outside the city. During that month we had to go there everyday and plant vegetables. There were also animals, like pigs and cows. We had to feed them. During that period we didn't study much. Every year we had to go to the farm for one month and for one month to the factory. There we learned about electricity, and about how to make lamps, things like that. The Communist Party did not take education seriously; they really destroyed many systems. But nobody could say a thing. They said that everybody who received higher education had 'to come down' and not feel more important than all the other people. You had to work in the farm and the factory; you had to be just like normal people. That's what they were thinking at the time. That was in 1973. And then in 1979, they re-installed the university exams again. So I was very lucky that I could go to university. My sister, who now lives in Canada, could also take the university test. In my family there were six children, only three of them have had a good chance. The first three didn't. My eldest sister was sent to a farm after middle school. She had to go really far away, I remember, to a really poor village. She went to work there for five or six years in a very poor house, in very bad conditions. My brother was sent to the factory, so he didn't have any chance to study either. My second sister… Because my father said: "I cannot have you going to the countryside, that is too bad", he pushed my sister into dancing […]. So, she took a test to go to the dancing school and then she became a member of a dancing company of 100 people. She had to dance at demonstrations. It was that or going to the farm. When you went to the farm, it was very difficult to come back to the city; it pretty much destroyed your life.

For other parents their low educational level was chiefly rooted in childhood poverty. Sheng-Du's and Shing's mother as well as Jiali's father noted that they had to leave school prematurely because their parents had lacked the necessary financial resources. They all grew up in large families with many siblings – in Malaysia and Hong Kong respectively - and were sent out by their parents to work and earn money as soon as they finished primary or lower secondary school. The mother of Sheng-Du and Shing talked about her withdrawal from school.

> I went to school for six years and then I quit, because at that time it was difficult to send all your children to school. I come from a big family: my parents had twelve children. It was hard for them. They didn't have much money. That is why I quit school. We had to work. After dropping out of school we were sent out to find something to do. What could I do? I started following sewing classes, to make clothes. And when I was thirteen, I apprenticed myself to a master in a shop. Besides that, we also had to cook for labourers; every day there were about forty people that needed lunch and dinner. We had to prepare it. And after cooking we had to work eh and learn how to sew on buttons, and so on. We had to learn everything. And yes, after three or four years, I think, we knew how to make clothes ourselves. And then I also followed a 2-year course to become a beautician. That was my hobby. At that time I was seventeen years old. After that I came to Belgium and then I got married [laughs]. My husband too, he only went to primary school. That's how it was in that time.

Other parents referred to the impact of parental educational status on a child's motivation, future ambitions and academic performance. Their accounts align with the 'status attainment theory' that posits a dominant effect of parental socio-economic position on ambition. Within this line of thought it was believed that for those growing up in highly educated families, the unfavourable political or economic conditions could be overcome thanks to high parental expectations regarding their children's educational future. Other parents conversely pointed to their parents' low educational level (in some cases illiteracy) as an important cause of dropping out or educational failure. They asserted that although their parents clearly possessed pro-school values and sufficient financial resources, they lacked the experience, skills and knowledge to adequately guide, counsel and stimulate their children in education.

> Mother of Sophie and Julie: "My husband and I did not study very well. We were young. My parents…they only…yeah, they supported us, but only by repeatedly saying: "study well". That's all. They had money to pay for our studies, but they could not support me with the right study methods. Nobody gave me advice on how to study. They themselves had not received a very good education. So

that is why my brother and I did not study very well. We had every right and chance to do so – the situation was very good – but we did not. It's a pity."

A small group of Chinese parents migrated to Belgium while they were still at secondary school themselves. They recall the sudden adaptation to a new socio-cultural and educational environment as quite a difficult experience. Yulian and Sam's mother moved to Flanders in the 1980s when she was fifteen years old. She recounted that because she lacked Dutch proficiency, the Pupil Guidance Centre[81] had advised her to retake the first year of secondary school. As the language barrier unfortunately remained, hampering her ability to master the curriculum's content, at eighteen she decided to leave school and to work in her aunt's Chinese restaurant. By that time she had not yet finished her third year of secondary education. The mother of Li-Zhi & Li-Na gave evidence of a similar experience. She moved from Macau to Belgium in 1986 at the age of 17. I quote her at length:

Mother: My sisters, my brother and I were not happy with the migration. No. In Macau we lived in a small flat and although my parents had to work hard, all that was normal to us. We did not expect anything else from the future.

Anthropologist: You were not longing for the West?

Mother: No. No, not at all. When we arrived in Belgium we felt really uneasy. We were absolute strangers. In our neighbourhood and in our school we were the only Chinese. And you know, in Macau we were among the best in our class, but here it was extremely difficult. The educational guidance centre referred us to the vocational track [BSO] where we ended up in classrooms with much younger pupils. On my fist day at school I was completely shocked. What kind of school was that, all kids arriving with different kinds of cloths and bags? I remember thinking: this is not a good place to study. It was terrible, but as we didn't speak Dutch, we were left with no other option. Had there been a special language class or better support as there exists now, I might have realised my dream: to study law. Instead we just had to drift with the current. We didn't understand the first word of what teachers were saying and as a result we came home with very bad school grades. You know, in Macau we were truly ashamed when we had an 8/10; we always aimed at 90 or 100 per cent! When I was a child in Macau, I only had very little time to study. I had to stick papers to the wall while I was cooking. At that time my father was already in Belgium and my mother was working in a factory. So I had to help here with cooking, cleaning…with everything, and during holidays I also had to work in the factory. Nevertheless I obtained good grades. In Belgium, however, we only got 50 per cent. We couldn't believe it! It was a disaster to us! We were so embarrassed and we felt so dumb. That is how we lost interest in school. So when my father informed me about his plans to open his own Chinese restaurant I immediately

[81] PMS or Psycho-medisch-sociaal Centrum (Psycho-Medical Social Centre) - now called CLB or Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding (Pupil Guidance Centre) – is the Flemish agency which pupils, parents, teachers and school leaders can consult for information or guidance. They play an important role in the contacts between schools, families and welfare or health institutions (Ministry of the Flemish Community, 2005)

proposed to help him. I said to him: let me work and leave the studying to my brother and sisters. But actually that was very stupid of me [laughs]. I could have done it differently. I could have gotten up early in the morning and studied Dutch until 12 pm, the opening hour of the restaurant. That would have been so much better for my future, but instead I was very lazy. I really regret that now. I really regret it. However, at that time it was normal for Chinese immigrants to study only the basics of Dutch, just enough to be able to serve customers in the restaurant. I carried the same ideas then.

Anthropologist: What about your twin sister? What did she do?

Mother: She also followed the vocational track. She currently owes a Chinese restaurant in Ghent. The same is true for my second sister.

Anthropologist: Aha. And what about your brother?

Mother: My brother… when he arrived he was only 9. He received a normal education in the general track [ASO]. He had nevertheless also been advised to start in the vocational or technical track. So he told me. But he said to them: "No, I want to go the general track". It was his choice.

Anthropologist: Did your parents desire more from him than from you?

Mother: No, they let us choose freely. We had to decide for ourselves what was important to us. They literally said to us: "if you don't want to study, you have to work. If you instead decide to study, we will give you that opportunity". Actually, by ourselves we were very conscious of the importance of education.

Anthropologist: Didn't your parents want you to pursue higher education?

Mother: Well, my parents have always truly valued education. When my father was young he studied at university in China. However, during the Cultural Revolution his family lost all her possessions and my father was sent to the countryside where he had to work as a farmer and listen to people who hadn't studied at all. He didn't want me to stop studying, but he accepted my choice.

The above testimony is particularly interesting as it demonstrates the often-complex nature of causality in relation to the lower educational level of these immigrant parents. It epitomizes several of the causal factors mentioned by other parents, while also adding new dimensions that have proven meaningful in the analysis of Chinese immigrant families' current educational strategies. One recurrent theme in these parents' accounts, as well in those of other informants who completed part of their study track in Belgium in the 1970s and 1980s, is the role of educational guidance centres in orienting Chinese pupils towards the vocational or technical track. In all likelihood this phenomenon should be understood as an act of 'streaming' – a structural discriminatory mechanism based on ethnic and social origin – that results in a systematic underestimation of migrant children's general capability (Nicaise, 2008). In the past these guidance centres have been – and to a certain extent still are - strongly criticized for referring migrant children towards lower study tracks (De Rynck, 2007; Hermans, 1995; Nicaise, 2008).

> Chinese school principal: My impression is that in the 1970s the PMS always oriented Chinese children to the technical track. I was sent to TSO, while I could have easily done ASO. Seriously, I was the best student of my class and they sent me to TSO! But, it's too late now. The same happened with my two younger sisters: they were also advised to start in technical education. Fortunately they had good teachers who reversely advised them to go to general education. I was earlier eh, and my teacher didn't do that. And all Moroccans were directed to BSO. I remember talking about it with my sister. "Why can all Chinese pupils be found in technical education, while all Moroccans study electricity or mechanics? We are not stupid or less intelligent. So, why is that?"

Language has played an important role in this process, but also biased perceptions and expectations of immigrant pupils on the part of teachers and student counsellors. Although in theory students and their parents always have had the formal right of free study choice, the opinion and advice of student counsellors was nonetheless quite decisive. Moreover, the extent to which parents and students could thwart that advice strongly depended on the family's socio-economic background and cultural capital. As for many other migrant parents, Li-Na and Li-Zhi's grandparents highly valued education, but most probably lacked the adequate Dutch ability and necessary knowledge of the school system to be able to question the advice and to motivate their children to continue studying. However, equally prominent in Lin-Na and Li-Zhi's mother's story is the way in which she also considers herself partly responsible for her limited educational attainment by claiming that she should have worked harder, studied more, and by asserting that she made a "stupid" decision by putting an end to her studies. However, clearly apparent in the narratives have also been underlying notions of personal responsibility for success and perseverance.

2.2. Synopsis of pupils' school trajectories

In the following section I bring a succinct overview of the focal pupils' school trajectories. This overview has a primarily descriptive and informing function, by providing the basic background information to future analyses.

2.2.1. Kindergarten and primary school

In Belgium general education is compulsory for all children from six to eighteen years old. As such, a child becomes of 'school age' in primary school on September 1 of the year in which she or he turns six until the day of his or her eighteenth birthday, regardless of whether secondary school was completed or not. As in many Western countries, it is also commonly believed that early entry into school, through the latter's socializing function, is beneficial for a child's general school attainment, even more so for children belonging to the lower social classes (Crul & Heering, 2008; Duquet et al., 2006; Heckman, 2011). In Flanders this belief is mirrored in the conditional nature of the entrance to primary school. In fact, in order to be admitted to mainstream Dutch-speaking primary education a child needs to have spent at least 220 half days in an official Flemish kindergarten. This regulation is expected to enhance children's general school readiness, particularly with those of foreign background, by rendering them familiar with the educational setting and with Dutch as the main language of instruction.

Unlike many other children with low-educated parents or of foreign background in Flanders (Groenez, Van den Brande, & Nicaise, 2003; Hirtt et al., 2007), without exception all Chinese pupils in this research had been enrolled in pre-school education, by which the entry age depended on the pre-school system of the then country of residence. However, generally they did not enter later than the age of four. After all, various pupils were found to have spent some time abroad, with periods ranging from a couple of months to some years. Whereas three youngsters had completed their entire pre- and primary schooling in China (Ning, Kristina Wu & Xiaoya), three others had spent parts of their early school years elsewhere, either in the country of origin (Lucas Lee, Wu Guo & Lou) or in other European nations (Finland, Holland). Overall, most pupils and their parents recall the pre- and primary school years as a positive period with few problems. Four students were nevertheless found to have repeated one year during primary education. Sophie and her parents attributed the retardation to medical reasons that had caused fatigue and decreased ability to concentrate in class. In the three other cases, pupils attributed the school retardation to (repeated) family moves and associated school transitions.

2.2.2. Secondary education

The majority of Asian pupils in Flanders – including Chinese – are to be found in the highest study track of the A-stream of secondary education (ASO). The popularity of this general track is by no means unique to families of Asian descent, as throughout Flanders many native and immigrant youngsters alike appear to postulate for ASO in the first year of secondary school (Duquet et al., 2006). An extensive survey carried out as part of the *Bet You!* Project, however, revealed that Asian pupils in Flanders are overrepresented in the general track (ASO). Likewise, for twenty-four Chinese youngsters in this research, the secondary school journey had begun in the general track. Although most of them were able to continue on this initially chosen path, seven pupils were found to descend at least a part of the waterfall, moving from the general into the technical track. In the end, one girl, Mei-Lan, left school prematurely without obtaining any qualification.

Five students were found to have repeated at least one year of secondary education. As shown in the following chart, for two students this added up to previous sustained school retardation. With two other first-generation students, however, their repetition of the academic year was caused by their participation in the OKAN class after migrating from China.

Pupil	**# times to repeat the year**		**# of schools**		**# of different study areas**	**Track(s)**
	Primary	***Secondary***	***Primary***	***Secondary***		
Amber	1	0	3	4	4	TSO
Chen Gao	0	0	1	1	1	ASO
Jiali	0	0	1	2	2	ASO -> TSO
Julie	0	0	1	1	1	ASO
Kristina Wu	0 (China)	1 (OKAN)	1 (China)	2 (1 China)	1	ASO
Lamchoi	0	0	2	3	2	ASO -> TSO
Lei	0	0	2	1	1	ASO
Limei	0	0	1	1	1	ASO
Li-Na	0	0	1	1	2	ASO
Li-Zhi	0	0	1	2	2	ASO ->

						TSO
Lou	0	0	2 (1 China)	1	1	ASO
Lucas Lee	0	0	1	2	1	ASO
Mei-Lan	1	2	3	4	4	ASO -> TSO -> BSO -> TSO -> early school drop out
Meiying	0	0	2	1	1	ASO
Ning	0	1 (OKAN)	1	2 (1 China)	1	ASO
Rose	0	1	1	2	2	ASO
Sam	0	0	1	2	1	ASO
Sheng-Du	0	0	1	2	2	ASO -> TSO
Shing	0	0	1	2	2	ASO -> TSO
Sophie	1	1	1	1	1	ASO
Tom	1	0	1	1	2	BSO
Terry	0	0	1	3	4	ASO -> TSO
Ty-Lee	0	0	1	1	1	ASO
Wu Guo	0	0	1	1	1	ASO
Xiaoya	0	1 (OKAN)	1	2 (1 China)	1	ASO
Yulian	0	0	2	1	1	ASO

3. Parents' occupational status

Profession	Mother	Father	Total
ACTIVE			**42**
Self-employed	**10**	**10**	**20**
Blue-collar workers	**5**	**3**	**8**
In Chinese enterprise	2	1	3
Other blue-collar jobs	3	2	5
White-collar workers	5	4	**9**

NON-ACTIVE			**5**
Homemaker	2	0	2
Unemployed	1	2	3

As shown in the above chart, the majority (20) of the working parents in this research were small and independent entrepreneurs. All of them – without exception - ran Chinese businesses: Chinese restaurants (the majority), retail stores, massage parlours or karaoke bars. Eleven parents were involved in blue-collar work. Of that group three worked in Chinese-owned enterprises and five for non-Chinese employers as factory workers, cleaning woman or shop assistant. Of the latter, three parents had previously been employed in the Chinese restaurant business as well. A total of nine parents could be labelled as white-collar workers. Their occupations varied from IT-specialist, scientist, accountant, Chinese language teacher in adult education, social or sworn translator, classical musician to pastor. Three parents were officially unemployed although in reality they were moonlighting within the confines of the Chinese community, respectively as a hairdresser, construction worker or cook. Similar findings could be detected as for the two mothers who identified themselves as homemakers. They too were actively involved, albeit part-time and informally, in the Chinese-run enterprises of their husband or other relatives.

3.1. Immigrant entrepreneurship: asset or a way out?

In line with other studies on the occupational orientation of the Chinese in Diaspora the above-mentioned data clearly show a preponderance of immigrant entrepreneurship amongst Chinese parent respondents (Liu-Huang, 2008; Ma & Cartier, 2003; Pang 2003a, 2003b; Rijkschroeff, 1998). This particularly applies to the lower-educated parents, although some university (or college) graduates too appeared to have strong professional links with the own ethnic community. Immigrant entrepreneurship is not, however, exclusively a characteristic of Chinese immigrant communities. Kloosterman and Rath (2003) have shown that virtually all advanced economies now include different groups of immigrant entrepreneurs with distinct ethnic backgrounds, which constitutes only one palpable result of globalization. Moreover, their numbers everywhere appear to be rising. To some extent the appeal of immigrant entrepreneur-owned businesses lies in their relatively low entry-barriers:

they often only require low investment, limited educational qualifications, little knowledge of the host language and at the same time hold the promise of quick return of profit" (Kloosterman & Rath, 2003; Liu, 2008). However, such instrumental reasoning does not sufficiently explain the predominance of immigrant entrepreneurship within the Chinese Diaspora. As already briefly referred to in the previous chapter, different variants have given cause to this phenomenon. To many diasporic Chinese, working within the confines of their own ethnic community has represented not only an achievable objective, but also a safe opportunity to work and to accumulate financial resources. We will take a quick glance in the next section at the reasons why this is true.

3.1.1. Cultural model of immigrant entrepreneurship

In his classic study of immigrant entrepreneurship, Bovenkerk (1983) distinguishes between three different models to explain migrants' motivation for becoming entrepreneurs. Two of these models appeared significant with regard to the Chinese entrepreneurial parents (CEP[82]) involved in this research and will be scrutinized in the following paragraphs. The first, the *cultural model* or *the theory of original entrepreneurial migration,* postulates that immigrant entrepreneurship is not the result but the cause of the migration and that migrant entrepreneurs often have experience and knowledge in the field as they come from countries where independent entrepreneurship represents the main source of income (Lambrecht, Verhoeve, & Martens, 2002, p. 5). When we take a closer look at the twenty CEP within this research, then the following elements can be noticed: 1/ Not one CEP had worked as independent entrepreneur in the country of origin, 2/ at least six CEP's had grown up in entrepreneurial families, 3/ seven CEP's had worked in the business of close relatives or acquaintances prior to becoming entrepreneurs themselves. These elements all point to a significant aspect of Chinese entrepreneurship, i.e. the value of interpersonal networks. Numerous scholars have shown that within Chinese society as well as throughout the Chinese Diaspora the use of social networks or *guanxi* is a deeply rooted and valued business strategy (Chan & Chan, 2011; Cohen, 1997; Liu, 2008; Pang, 2003b; Rijkschroeff, 1998; Salaff et al., 2010). The most powerful and thus most frequently used network is the one based on family or kinship (Chan & Chan, 2011; Pang, 2002, 2003b; Song, 1997). Chan & Chan write: "In

[82] My abbreviation.

Chinese societies, economic behavior has always evolved around the 'core' of the family. The concept of the 'family' is at the heart of one's loyalty, and figures prominently in the Chinese economic life" (2011, p. 19).

The importance of family ties appeared evident in the occupational realm of the respondents in this research, albeit in varying ways. Many parents belonging to the first generation came to Europe as part of the chain migration pattern and had been induced by relatives residing in Belgium or other European countries (brothers/sisters, uncles/aunts) to assist them in their family business. Thus for many Chinese parents, the Chinese catering and retail sector constituted an easy and available gateway to work and settle down in Europe. After some years of assistance and building up professional experiences and financial means, most eventually started up their own businesses.

> Anthropologist: How was it to arrive in Belgium?
> Father of Amber & Mei-Lan: It was not difficult because I was lucky. My older brother already had a restaurant here and my mother also had some money, not very much, but enough for my twin brother and me to start up our own restaurant. I mean: my older brother had one so he helped me and my twin brother to start one. First, when we arrived in Belgium, we had to learn how to run a restaurant, learn how to serve and cook and do the shopping and so on. So we could keep ourselves very busy. We had no difficulties; I had no difficulties at all. So, when I look back: we were lucky, we were young and the time was ok.

Others were still children when they migrated to Belgium and are in fact the offspring of the group of Chinese just described. These parents were ingrained in the family business, as they grew up in it and were often deployed during their childhood as part of the workforce during after-school hours. Of this group of 1.5 or second-generation Chinese respondents, some – in this case exclusively fathers - had inherited their parents' businesses. They recall that the value of professional independence and entrepreneurship was transmitted to them throughout their childhood lives. Additionally, parents referred to the role of Chinese acquaintances and fellow-villagers as significant providers of job opportunities within the immigrant business sector. Their narratives also show that in case of such non-kin relations, those who eventually left the businesses tended to maintain good relationships with former employers. In the words of these parents: "they are our friends", "we still visit each other quite a lot".

Shing: "My father migrated to Belgium in 1975 at the age of 20. The reason he migrated? He had many friends here who had told him it was a good country to live in. So my father came and started working in their restaurant."

"I came to Europe in 1983, alone. I was 21 and my family had many acquaintances in Holland. […] When I arrived there they asked me: "Do you like it here?" I said I did. So I decided to stay a little longer and I started looking for a job in one of their restaurants."

All of the above-data indicate that Chinese business management is characterised by a clear and vigorous intertwining of financial, social and labour capital. This can be referred to as a form of "ethnic capital" (Chan & Chan, 2011, p. 21) and is based on important cultural principles, including 'enforceable trust' and 'bounded solidarity' (Chan & Chan, 2011; Cohen, 1997; Liu, 2008; Pang, 2003; Salaff et al., 2010; Rijkschroeff, 1998). Thus, not only within the Chinese Diaspora but also in Chinese societies in general, economic behaviours tend to evolve around trust and risk management that extends from kin-based relations or in-group affiliations, with the latter being based on either geography or conjugality (Chan & Chan, 2011). However, can this 'cultural model' sufficiently explain Chinese immigrants' blatant preference for labour within the confines of the own ethnic community? A more in-depth analysis of respondents' narratives suggests that still other variables have played a significant role in the actual decision making process.

3.1.2. Immigrant entrepreneurship as circumvention

Two fathers expressed their previous or current aspiration to "become a big boss". Prior to the migration move they had longed to become well-off independent entrepreneurs. Yet, none of the fathers had really determined the object of their trade or the content of their future business in advance.

Anthropologist: What did you dream of before you moved to Europe? What were your aspirations?
Father of Kristina Wu: A boss. I wanted to become a big boss. Thirty years ago the economic conditions in China were not really good. It was only starting to improve. […] People normally refer to a lawyer, a notary, or a doctor when they speak of 'a good job'. When you have to work with your hands, then that is not a good job in my opinion. So, I dreamed of becoming a big boss. I knew I could not be doctor, or a lawyer. However, I also knew that I would first have to work hard in manual labour in order to save

some money and to open up my own business. So, I did. Now I have two massage parlours; in the future maybe three, or maybe even additional businesses, as for example a restaurant. That is my dream.
Anthropologist: So, this means that you have not reached your dream yet?
Father: No, but it will come. It will come. I don't have any other dreams. All my dreams are business-related. I want to go further, and further, and further. I cannot say: the day I earn that much money, I will be happy. No.
Anthropologist: Then, do you consider yourself successful now?
Father: No.
Anthropologist: No? Why not?
Father: No, because of my dream. It is a long dream eh. I'm only a little satisfied now. Let's say I have only just realized the base of my dream. Now I have to start flying. [Laughs]

At first glance this stance seems to coincide with the model of entrepreneurship that Lambrecht and colleagues (2002) have discerned as the 'entrepreneurial drive', or the general desire to work as independent entrepreneurs, regardless of ethnic background. However, in addition to the entrepreneurial and cultural model, Bovenkerk (1983) has also pointed to the role of 'disadvantages', social constraints and discrimination on the labour market in the choice for immigrant entrepreneurship. He classifies this under the 'reactive or disadvantage model' (Lambrecht et al., 2002; Pang 2003a). With specific reference to the Chinese in Flanders, Pang (2002) and Liu (2008) point to immigrant entrepreneurship as a safe haven vis-à-vis perceived or real discrimination in the labour market and as a way to circumvent specific barriers they may encounter on the regular labour market. In line with this I argue that the way in which at least some parents in this research engage in an entrepreneurial discourse (*"I wanted to be a boss", "I want to work independently"*) should be interpreted as resulting from an identity negotiation with the social mainstream vis-à-vis whom they hold a disadvantaged position. Many CEP's, even the two fathers, certainly endorsed the 'disadvantage and discrimination paradigm' when talking about the various barriers they encountered while job-hunting on the regular labour market, including language difficulties and the absence or non-recognition of qualifications or experience. Although the latter was certainly not by all regarded as an expression of racism or discrimination, many of them did feel pushed toward self-employment and they somehow felt held in by the bounded realm of immigrant entrepreneurship. They sometimes expressed this through clear signs of depreciation with respect to their occupational position. "It is too hard work". From this perspective, the specific ambition of the two fathers to become "the boss" might be interpreted as an act of framing. Chan & Chan likewise put forward that "from such a disadvantaged position and in a global society where economic capital is the name of the

game, the identity of a 'boss' or 'entrepreneur' is absolutely something to be marvelled at" (Chan & Chan, 2011, p. 110). In general, many of the CEP's narratives reveal ambiguous meanings. Despite the apparent pride parents held for what they had achieved, many clearly also suffered from what Pang denoted as the "inferiority complex" (2002, p. 159). Hwang (2014) writes that many Chinese tend to relate educational level to social status. Therefore they mostly consider blue-collar jobs inferior to 'mental work' and attribute the former to laziness and lack of interest in education. The following quotes by parents clearly illustrate that for many of them their current occupational position has not been a straightforward career choice, but rather a means to survival in the short run and upward social-mobility in the long run.

> Mother of Meying: "We have a restaurant now, and since eight years I also work as a bookkeeper. I didn't think we would succeed. We run a restaurant, yes, something completely different from what we did before, but we didn't really have another choice. We had to work, and a restaurant was the only available option."

> Mother of Sheng-Du & Shing: "My husband was a karate teacher in Malaysia and when he came here he dreamed of establishing his own karate school. He tried, but it didn't provide him with enough income. And you cannot stay like that for the rest of your life eh. At some point you have to change your mind. That is why he started working in the kitchen of a tiny Chinese restaurant." [The family is currently the owner of a Chinese restaurant]

> Father of Wu Guo: You know, when we came here, we lost our jobs from before. We could not continue doing the same as we did in China. We had to do something else, like, you know in the beginning we opened a small shop, and afterwards we do the travel agency. Actually I am not really a business man, but I have to do this for life, otherwise I have to work in the restaurant and I don't really like that. I have no choice.

Various parents have nevertheless tried to escape the above-mentioned occupational constraints by either taking part in Dutch language courses and/or by enrolling in vocational adult education. The majority recalls that it was however done in vain despite numerous job applications, as their Dutch proficiency remained too limited to be accepted on the regular labour market.

3.1.3. Transcendence of ethnic boundaries

In January 2011, during a conversation with Amber and Mei-Lan on their father, Enlai's, somewhat bumpy occupational trajectory, I was told that for some time he had flirted with the idea of starting up a chip stall. Many Belgians and non-Belgians alike, consider chips and chip stalls to be central elements of the Belgian culinary and cultural heritage. Also the girls' reaction clearly indicated a strong resistance to what they considered a true 'ethnic mismatch'. In the end Enlai renounced his initial plan and set up a new Chinese restaurant instead.

> Amber: My father had not really planned to open up a restaurant. He actually wanted to start a small takeaway.
> Mei-Lan: A chip stall actually! Hooooh! [Clearly disgruntled] A chip stall, that was so…ooooh, that was so weird! Chips are so Flemish and then a Chinese would come and sell them?
> Amber: Yes, that is so weird!
> Mei-Lan: Oh, I was really against it!

This seemingly trivial event in Enlai's biography is very significant when analysed against its background. For about a year later, on the 25th of November 2011, the Flemish news program 'Ter Zake' reported on the apparent new phenomenon of Chinese immigrants taking over Belgium's "national pride": the chip stall.[83] The television coverage was developed after a Chinese couple had been rewarded for being "The best chip sellers of Limburg Province", and after a newspaper article in De Standaard, one of Flanders' most prominent newspapers, had opened with the following unequivocal words: "The Chip Chinese [Literal translation of the word *frietchinees*] is advancing. More than ever, we can see chip sellers with Turkish, Moroccan, but in particular with Chinese roots popping up. They have discovered a hole in the market and are adapting well" [84] (Abbeloos, 2012). Eventually, in 2012, the word *frietchinees* was elected by the Belgian public as the most important new word to be officially included in the Dutch Grote Van Dale Dictionary.

[83] http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws/videozone/archief/programmas/terzake/2.18797/2.18798/1.1162352
[84] Original wording: "*Er duiken steeds meer frituristen op met Turkse, Marokkaanse maar vooral Chinese roots. 'Ze zien het gat in de markt en passen zich goed aan*.'

[Photo taken by Veronique Van Geit at Carnival celebrations in Aalst, De Standaard 15/02/2015, Translation of caption: *Wilfrit is done for. The Chip Chinese is coming.* "Frit" stands for "French fries".]

However, based on their numerical dominance in the sector (Harzoune, 2013), Moroccan or Turkish immigrants would seemingly 'deserve' such a title, as they are much more likely to be linked with the act of selling chips. So, why the word *frietchinees*? I argue in favour of two explanatory grounds. First, in its aftermath numerous other newspaper articles[85] and radio reports[86] on the topic of *frietchinees* were published and broadcasted, all having in common a discourse that emphasised the "splendid integration of Chinese immigrants" and "the Chinese spirit of enterprise". At first sight this seems to point to a generally positive image of Chinese immigrants in Flanders, which strongly contrasts with that of the Turkish and Moroccan communities whose general integration patterns have been problematized over the past years. Ruud Hendrickx, current language advisor of the Flemish Regional Television (VRT) and general editor of the Grote Van Dale Dictionary, explicitly

[85] See for example:
- http://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/blkla_20140103_001: "Frietchinees neemt frituur Kris and Agnes over"
- http://www.volkskrant.nl/leven/frietchinees-in-belgie-definitief-geaccepteerd~a3365560/: "Frietchinees in België definitief geaccepteerd".

[86] See for example:
- 'De Ochtend' on Radio 1, 18 December 2012
- 'Peter Van de Veire Ochtendshow' on MNM Radio, 18 December 2012

denoted the notion of *frietchinees* as a "positive" and "feel-good" word" (Hendrickx, 2012). The general idea behind it appears to be that if the adoption of a Belgian national product has become inevitable, then we prefer our adoptive parents to be Chinese rather than Moroccan or Turkish. There is, however, also another side to the coin. After all, for decades the Chinese in Flanders have formed an 'invisible' minority, and to a certain point they still are. So, with this in mind one could argue that when a Chinese family adopts a chip stall, this inevitably catches the eye. After all, to many Belgians, the Chinese immigrant truly remains an 'other'. Taking a closer look at the picture above (cf. inability to pronounce the 'r', costume...), one can easily see that it also mirrors persisting stereotyping and unwillingness or inability of the Flemish society to view the Chinese in more nuanced ways.

I argue that the way in which the word 'integration' is deployed in relation to the *frietchinees,* the phenomenon should rather be understood in terms of 'adaptation'. They adapt to local opportunity structures for work and are willing to adopt new 'products', even those that are not commonly considered ethnic Chinese and are linked to what are generally considered low-prestige jobs. It clearly shows that ethnicity and cultural content are not the same (Barth, 1969) and that immigrant entrepreneurship, as well as the way in which the parents in this research are involved in it, should be looked upon as a vehicle for upward social mobility. It would be wrong to just regard it in ethnic terms, as we always need to take into account the broader socioeconomic and institutional context. Moreover, as argued by Song (2004), despite the success in terms of business enterprise and upward social mobility, many Chinese immigrants still tend to remain at the margins of many western societies, as for example in Britain (cited in Lau-Clayton, 2014). In fact, many Chinese restaurateurs are still confronted with discrimination by customers or the general public alike to varying degrees, as was also testified by the Chinese families in this study.

3.2. The bittersweet fruit of self-sacrifice

The 'inferiority complex', as mentioned above, is particularly evident when, within a transnational realm, former Chinese peers are taken as the main group of reference. As could be observed throughout the fieldwork in Belgium and especially in China, on various occasions during their visits to the home country, parents would meet with former friends and colleagues. They – in particular the higher educated mothers - recall that during those

encounters they were often confronted with a reversed image of themselves. After all, as a result of their migration, some of these women had undergone significant downward social mobility in terms of occupational status, while in the meantime their peers in the homeland had been able to seize high-ranking positions, mainly owing to China's rapid economic growth. This contradiction was usually reflected upon as the bittersweet fruit of self-sacrifice of the migrating adult. Throughout their biographies, the individual short-term losses caused by the drop in occupational standing were put back into balance by perceived long-term benefits in the context of the broader family.

I return to the former analysis of parental educational status in which I pointed to the ways in which parental narratives on migration motives had in common the aspiration to exempt children from disadvantaged situations (economic, political, educational) as well as the notion of self-sacrifice. To some degree, a similar discourse could be detected in parental reflections on occupational status. On different occasions parents denoted their business strategy as an instrumental means of capital accumulation for the family, in particular for the children. In some cases the notion of self-sacrifice was explicitly conveyed as a distinguished feature of Chinese parental roles. In justifying their personal downward mobility these parents strongly contrasted Western or Belgian upbringing with their own parenting styles, by which Chinese parents were believed to renounce self-fulfilment and to put the family first at all times.

> Anthropologist: So can you tell something about how your trip in China looks like?
> Wu Guo's mother: First we go to Xiamen. There I have most of my friends from university. They are all university professors themselves [Laughs]. My husband and I are ashamed, because we have the same level of education as them, but in Belgium doing "low work"[87]
> Anthropologist: Can you talk about this with them?
> Mother: Yes we can talk about it, because I am proud that I have three children. Normally, like when people move to another country, they always say that for the first generation it is difficult. That means that we never can do what we want, but we can offer the basics to our children. Like we, we both have a master's degree, but as a civil engineer in Belgium, it is not easy to find a job. It is really very difficult [Laughs]. That is why we tried to start a business. And my friends here [in China]… everybody understands, it doesn't matter because everybody knows many students from university that went abroad and they know that everybody needs to find the money to live. But now, most people in China have money and parents can give money to support the education of their children. Twenty years ago,

[87] Wu Guo's parents started off with a silk shop in Ghent but then set up a Chinese travel agency, directed at Chinese businessmen.

when we left, that was just impossible. [Laughs] Impossible! The Chinese economy was very low. We only had maybe 10 Yuan. I remember, I took 200 US dollar when I went to Belgium; that was all my money [Laughs]. You cannot imagine that now.

Ming Tian: "To me the migration has been somewhat unfortunate. Before I left China I worked as an assistant professor at Shanghai University. By contrast, the only thing I can do here is to teach Chinese in adult education, and besides that I am a homemaker. If we had stayed in China I could have been much more…However…uh… I feel that when you have a good family and your children are doing well, this is what gives you most dignity. Yes, that is what dignity is to me. You know, we… we always put the family first. In that way, my opinion differs from the general Flemish one. Here people always put themselves first. Only then they move their attention to the others, the children and the husband. With us, Chinese women, it is different: first comes the family, the children, the husband and then finally ourselves. To us, the success of our family is our own personal success. So, when Chen Gao receives a good education and he's is doing well in school, I consider that also my success, yes. I do not complain. We feel we have to do everything for our children. With you, Europeans, that is not the case!" [Laughs].

3.3. (Trans) national occupational mobility

While with most Chinese families involved in this research, the occupational position of parents had largely been stable, with others it could be observed that parents had taken a somewhat irregular path, resulting from either a conscious choice or due to unanticipated circumstances. These parents' biographies demonstrated a marked openness to mobility, either within cities or between countries. Initially, Sam and Yulian's father had worked in his parents' wholesale shop in Antwerp. After a few years he decided to sell his paternal inheritance in the shop to his brother in order to start his own smaller store in Hasselt. Several years later, he opened a second business in Ostend. His wife and children went to live in Ostend, while he himself started commuting between Antwerp, Hasselt and Ostend. Again, a few years later he sold the shop in Ostend and Sam and Yulian, together with their mother, returned to Antwerp. Similarly, the father of Mei-Lan and Amber bought and sold various Chinese restaurants in different Flemish cities meanwhile taking his wife and children alongside him as he moved.

Various Chinese parents in this research were also actively engaged in professional relations with their respective home countries. Those who owned ethnic businesses – typically

the father - frequently shuttled back and forth to Hong Kong or China to buy stock or equipment, or in search of new business opportunities. While in one family the father was actively on the outlook for renewed occupational links with China, in two other families it were the mothers that were considering setting up their own import businesses. In contrast to most other mothers in this study, these women seemed to be oriented more towards self-realization, though without truly renouncing family concerns. The mother of Kristina Wu dreamed of importing beauty products from China. To achieve her goal, she was networking with Chinese people in the UK. The mother of Li-Na and Li-Zhi, Yue, on the other hand, had not yet decided yet on the nature of the goods but considered trading high-end silks. Remarkable to her story is that she did not return to her home region Macau, but instead to Shanghai, where here brother had recently re-migrated to from Belgium. She also assumed that maintaining good contacts (*guanxi*) with the local manufacturer would entail at least a part-time residence in China. She also considered a fulltime return to be an option, but only if her children would be willing to join her. From her story it was clear that she had already introduced the idea to them, but to no avail. On the other hand, she also feared that it was likely to become a difficult task, as she no longer understood or even accepted Chinese business and communication strategies.

> Anthropologist: And a fulltime return to China? Is that an option?
> Yue: I don't know. If the business would require being there constantly, I might do that.
> Anthropologist: And what about your children?
> Yue: I asked them what they thought of the idea and oohh…they say it's better for them to stay here. But they've never been there, so it's impossible for them to know.
> Anthropologist: And would they agree with you returning alone?
> Yue: Me, alone? That would be quite lonely, wouldn't it? I don't want that either. Halftime yes, fulltime no.

> Yue: I told my brother I would like to start a business. He says: Ho, ho, difficult, really difficult and I cannot give you any good advice.
> Anthropologist: Why?
> Yue: Because we are not acquainted anymore with the specific ways of doing business, of getting things done. How can I explain this to you? For example, imagine that you are a social worker from the local centre of public welfare (OCMW) and that I am someone who applied for a benefit and that you come to visit me in my house as part of your formal job. As a Chinese I would immediately start 'our relationship' by giving you presents, I would invite you to diner and to other things. By doing that, I would hope that you would give me more benefits. It's probably hard to imagine for you, but that's the way you get things to happen.

Anthropologist: And would it be hard for you as well when you go back?

Yue: Yes, it would be difficult because I no longer accept such things. Here in Belgium, I work as a community interpreter. Often, Chinese newcomers approach me with wine and other presents hoping that this can provide them with extra information or services. But I want to be neutral. It's not easy. You know, I don't see any chances yet in China. We'll see. I just want to go there and take a closer look at my options.

Chen Long, one of the parent respondents who is a classical musician working at the Symphonic Orchestra of the Flemish Opera, was recently offered a job as a professor at the Conservatory of Shanghai. In recent times, China has outlined a deliberate policy of attracting highly educated and skilled overseas Chinese with alluring salaries and positions in a broad number of domains: technology, economy, science, and also arts. At least two of his acquaintances had recently moved back to China after they were offered a job as professor or dean at a Chinese university. One of them was a musician colleague from Paris, the other one, coincidentally, the father of my pupil respondent Lou. In both cases, the wives and children stayed behind in Europe, for the stated purpose of children's education. Chen Long's father did not accept the offer and the quote below indicates the reasons for which it was declined. Instead, he currently holds a series of guest lectures at the Shanghai Conservatory.

…but I have my family here, I have everything here. I don't want to go back. So, I declined their offer. It might be a pity for them, but I have my own life here. Of course the job they offered me would have been more prestigious than the one I have now. But to them it's either all or nothing. I proposed to be there during half of the year, and to remain in Belgium for the other half, but they don't want that. They want me to be there a hundred per cent. But, I can't, I can't.

In general it can be stated that various Chinese parents were maintaining or establishing new transnational professional networks with the homeland, with China or with the broader Chinese Diaspora. These networks were partly inspired by emotional entanglements, and partly by economic opportunities. Important to note is that their stories transcend the mere desire for a return to the homeland. Particularly in the case of Yue and Kristina Wu's mother, there also was an important gender dimension present in their stories. While to some extent the women themselves seemed to pursue a recognized identity as independent entrepreneurs, the reaction of the men involved reveals a more traditional perspective on gender roles. The latter did not seem to attach much value to their wives' projects, nor did they put much faith in the projects' success rates. Given the low number of

cases to build on, it is however difficult to determine whether this is a more widespread phenomenon, or rather two exceptional cases.

> Anthropologist: And your wife's dreams, were they the same as yours?
> Father of Kristina Wu: My wife is…well, all women are…oh, yes, you're also a woman [Laughs]. In most cases…in most cases eh, women are not very ambitious. When the business is going well and they can live a good life… that is enough for them. So, now she's talking to people in England. Talking, talking, and talking. That's ok. And if the talking stops: that's also ok.

4. Religion

4.1. Divergent and conventional religious affiliations

Religion	Mother	Father	Total Parents (42)	Pupil
Buddhism	3	1	4	0
Daoism	1	1	2	1
Christianity				
Evangelical Protestantism	4	4	8	4
Catholic	3	3	6	3
Secular	6	7	13	14
Unknown	5	4	9	4

Six parents in this research claimed affiliation to one or two major Chinese institutional religions, i.e. Buddhism and Daoism. Fourteen identified themselves as Christians, of which eight as evangelical Protestants. The large majority of parents (n=13), however, professed to have no religious affiliation. Similar to their parents, most focal pupils (n=14) claimed to be secular. Four pupils in this research also proved to be active followers of evangelical Protestantism, while another four identified themselves as Catholics or Taoists. This overall image corresponds to other scholarly findings, which indicate a fragmented religious composition and orientation of Chinese communities worldwide (Chan, 2005; Iwamura, 2014; Sun, 2013; Woo, 2010).

For those parents and pupils who claimed affiliation to one of the institutional religions – both from Ghent and Antwerp - three specific religious institutions appeared

significant in their biographies. One is the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple, currently the only Chinese Buddhist temple in Belgium. The temple is located in Antwerp's Chinatown since 1998 and has his headquarters in Taiwan. According to Miao Heng Shi, the female Buddhist monk that was responsible for the temple during the time of this study, there were about 200 members at that time. The temple is open to tourists and schools and often collaborates with the city council of Antwerp in the organisation of public cultural activities. Several other informants and focal families were affiliated to one of three Chinese Evangelical Protestant Churches in Antwerp. One of these is called De Noorse Zeemanskerk, and another is known as Antwerp Truth Church Belgium. The latter was established in 1979, making it the first Chinese church in Antwerp. It is located at the edge of Chinatown and has its roots in Hawaii. It is also a member of the umbrella Association of Flemish Pentecost Churches (PVV)[88]. On Sundays this church organizes services, Sunday schools and women's meetings. Sunday schools generally focus on Bible study and moral education. A youth meeting is organized every Saturday afternoon for about twenty to thirty youngsters between twelve and twenty-three years old. The church has an average of 100 members, of which 60 to 70 can be denoted as regular participants in meetings and services, according to the minister. A third Protestant church in Antwerp, the Christ's Kingdom Church, is smaller in size and was established more recently. It is also located in Chinatown.

Generally speaking, all four above-mentioned institutions, although divergent in religious background, have different characteristics in common. All but one are located in or near Chinatown and have weekly worship services in addition to special services and festivities throughout the year. During these services Cantonese and/or Mandarin are the main media of communication, while singing occurs in Mandarin and texts are written in Chinese characters. Although the Truth Church provides translation into Dutch[89] and has Flemish people amongst its congregation, the membership composition of all four institutions is nevertheless predominantly mono-ethnic Chinese. Most affiliates are those in the Chinese restaurant trade (1st, 2nd and 3rd generation), more recent Chinese business families, and Mainland Chinese students. They chiefly originate from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, and Malaysia. Another common feature of the four religious institutions is their

[88] PVV is the abbreviation for 'Verbond Vlaamse Pinkstergemeenten' and exists since 1993. For more information: http://www.vvp.be.res7.mijnpreview.com/joomla/. They also have a Facebook page with many pictures and videos: https://www.facebook.com/AntwerpTruthChurch/timeline

[89] For native Dutch speakers but also of or second-, and third-generation Chinese children and youngsters whose Chinese proficiency is too limited to attend services otherwise.

inherent transnational nature. All have their headquarters abroad and maintain contacts with other churches from the same religious denomination in Europe and beyond. In case of the Protestant churches, this is often coupled with Chinese Christian missionary strategies or evangelistic missions.

Various authors have shown that faith-based organizations can play an important role in the socio-educational integration of immigrant youngsters and their families, especially in urban areas (Antrop-Gonzales et al., 2011; Cao, 2005; Jeynes, 2003; Sun, 2013). They appear to do so in a variety of ways. In the following section I examine whether and how this might be the case for the Chinese families in Flanders and which local and transnational mechanisms might underlie this process of integration.

4.2. Religion and socioeducational integration

The families in this study referred to the churches and Buddhist temples as places to exercise religion. On different occasions, however, the Chinese Protestant ministers, their wives, as well as the Buddhist monk uttered that in many cases the religiosity of their members was not devotedly profound, something they considered emblematic of the Chinese Diaspora. In point of fact, throughout this study I could indeed observe many different levels of religious commitment with my respondents, with some families (or individual members) clearly identifying with and participating in their religion more strongly than others. Yue, a Protestant minister's wife, explicitly deplored the fact that in her experience many of the church members were often more Christian in name than in actual practice. As Yue also appears to suggest, part of this can be explained by the fact that of the self-proclaimed religious parents, only a few had received a Christian or Buddhist socialisation during childhood as many of them grew up in the Mao-era without any religion. Only a few parents had received such socialisation, for example by attending missionary schools in China, Macau or Hong Kong or through (secret) parental religious profession at home. This implies that many of the religious parents had in fact converted[90] to Christianity or Buddhism only after their arrival in Belgium. More specifically, six parents had converted to evangelical Protestantism and two to Buddhism.

[90] I define 'conversion' as the transition from no religion or one religion to another.

> Yue: Many of them grew up in the Mao-era without religion. Now they suddenly have a religion but they have absolutely no idea of what it truly is, which I find very sad. Many people come to our church or to other churches and they say they are Christians, but they don't really understand what Jesus has done. […] When I visit them in their houses and talk to them about Jesus, they're not truly interested.

Importantly, as adult converts the Protestant parents form part of a broader and growing surge of Chinese immigrants' conversion to Christianity, and more specifically to evangelical Protestantism. In the past few decades this phenomenon has caught the attention of ethnographers and other social researchers who have detected a similar trend amongst different Chinese immigrants at various parts of the world, including Europe, the US, and Canada (Iwamura, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2006; Woo, 2010; Yang, 1999; Zhu, 2013).

With specific reference to the Chinese families in this study, the question arises what attracts them into evangelical Protestantism or Buddhism. What are the social and cultural factors underpinning their surge for a Christian or Buddhist tutelage? Can the Protestant surge solely be explained by the apparent evangelist stance of these churches and their overall mission to convert people? This seems quite unlikely since, as also indicated by the ministers themselves, converting is a particularly time-consuming and difficult task in which they, as missionaries, not always succeed. In view of the fact that the phenomenon is so widespread, other socio-cultural elements must also play a role. The following sections take a closer look at the reasons brought forward by the respondents themselves and offer an analysis within the social ecology of the local and transnational context.

4.2.1. Religion and religious sites as sources of social support

The following quotes are extracted from interviews with Mr Chen, a Chinese Protestant minister, and Li-Na and her mother who are respectively a Protestant minister's daughter and wife.

> Anthropologist: Looking at your social network here in Belgium, it is correct to say that it mainly consists of Chinese people?
> Mother of Li-Na: Yes, chiefly Chinese people. We work in the church eh, and only Chinese people come to our church.

Anthropologist: Where are they from?

Mother of Li-Na: Oh, from everywhere. Some recently arrived here, while others have been in Belgium for a long time. Their number is not fixed. People come and go. In the beginning they are often looking for solutions to specific problems. For example, Chinese who don't speak Dutch come here to find a solution for their problems or they show me documents or letters they've received, which I then translate for them. Yesterday, I also went to the hospital where one of our church members had just given birth to her baby. These are the kind of things we do every day.

Anthropologist: Who are the people who come to church here?

Li-Na: Uh…they are…I think they are mainly migrants from Fujian….uh… yes. Those people know each other well. They often play Mah-jong at each other's houses. I don't know them very well. They don't really speak with me. They usually want to talk to my mother about documents and stuff. For translation and so on. Most of them don't speak Dutch.

Mr. Chen: So, talking about my job, it is not only about visiting Chinese restaurants to preach the word. I also go to jail to visit those Chinese people who got caught by the police because of illegal work or because they don't have a residence permit here. If there is a need, I go to visit them. My wife and I also go to the hospitals to visit Chinese patients if they need us for translation. And so, we are very occupied. Every day. Every day.

Above-mentioned interview extracts demonstrate that the function of the Protestant churches clearly transcends religious purposes. During interviews with three respective ministers and their relatives, all repeatedly emphasized their additional role as providers of formal or informal social support 'services'. Such services often consisted of accompanying church members in their everyday practical concerns, including administrative and translation matters, and also practical education matters. For example, new Chinese arrivals often had very limited to any knowledge of the educational system in Flanders. They considered the church and its concomitant social network as important resources of practical information that could support them in making valuable choices regarding schools and study tracks for their children.

Jacob: My father, who's a minister, is always in close contact with the people from the church. They often ask him for advice. Previously, they were mainly people from Hong Kong but nowadays they mostly come from elsewhere. And they often bring their kids along. They ask my father to which schools they should send their children and which environments are good for their children to learn.

Another important global phenomenon is the formal role of Chinese religious institutions in the establishment of Chinese heritage schools as a community service (Sun,

2014; Yang, 1999). At the time of the research the Buddhist temple was organizing language and culture classes, albeit on a very small scale (10 students). The Truth Church on the other hand had reached hundreds of second-generation youngsters in the past. Given the significance of these kinds of schools in the discussion on Chinese family strategies centred on education, I will not elaborate on the topic in detail here, but refer readers to the tenth chapter of this dissertation, which is devoted entirely to Chinese heritage education.

Apart from support with day-to-day practical concerns, the churches' and temple's social services equally encompassed offering socio-emotional support during specific life-altering events or times of distress. Much research has already been carried out with migrants on the role of religion in coping with different kinds of life stresses, such as illness, death, alienation or uncertainty about the future (Cao, 2005; Hunter & Chau, 2007; Wang, Rober, Dillen & Enzlin, 2015). A recent study by Wang et al. (2015) on Christians of Chinese origin in Belgium has shown that the latter's encountering with stressful life events, including the typical challenges characteristic of the migration and adaption to the new social environment, can generate fundamental changes in the level of religious activity and belief, or even conversion. Adapting religious coping strategies is said to alleviate uncertainty, provide hope and meaning as well as help people cope with a wide range of problems. This is exactly what is echoed in the following narratives by the Chinese respondents. In the first interview part Enlai explains his gradual turn to Buddhist practices, while the second extract sheds light on Li-Na's family's relation to God.

> Enlai: Normally, we go once a month to the Buddhist temple in Antwerp. From time to time, I also borrow books from there. Previously, we didn't go, but now we do. I'm the one behind it.
> Anthropologist: Can you explain?
> Enlai: First I was thinking…My wife, she was always having negative thoughts. I hoped that bringing her to the temple would give her some positive energy. So, I did it for her. And…uh, of course I also believe it…I like the philosophy of Buddhism and the way you have to bend down and the way you pray. It's a totally different way of thinking eh. And…uh...it was a difficult time then. Going to the temple has strenghtened our will. I mean, when your heart changes, your will changes too. That is Buddhism. It has helped me too. I don't feel pain anymore. I feel very good. You know what I mean?
> Anthropologist: Yes. So, but you weren't Buddhist before?
> Enlai: No, only since three years.

> Anthropologist: Do you consider your children to be genuine Christians?

> Mother of Li-Na: Li-Na and Li-Zhi: Yes. Their younger sister: less. She's still young and she needs time to get to know God, to really experience her religion. It's a personal thing. She has to build a personal relationship with God. Li-Na has more personal experiences with God. She sometimes tells me that when she struggles with something, school things for example, she would pray and then she would feel much better. My youngest daughter never tells such thing, but she's too small to have experienced real problems [laughs]… But we often talk about religion at home. My husband always tells them: "Look, you can never be sure of anything; nobody knows whether you will be safe tomorrow. But if something happens to you, then you really have to hold on to God. We know, because we have had many problems in the past. We also need God's help. And you too." Every time I have a problem, I pray to Jesus. Yes. And then I really feel reassured. Every time. When I came here, I encountered a lot of problems with the language, with working in a restaurant and I always listened to Jesus.

4.2.2. Chinese religious institutions as a means to ethnic belonging

In both upper cases prayer appeared to improve respondents' capability to cope with uncertainties and distress, which corresponds to the findings of Wang et al. (2015). Although the two accounts mostly speak of the religious experience as a personal or family strategy, both parents as well as other Chinese respondents in this study also explicitly referred to the churches or temples as important sites for social networking within the own ethnic community and thus sources of social capital. Yue recalled that her religion and being part of a religious community had given her a lot of strength during the past years. She posited that almost her entire social network was linked to the church community. Enlai likewise demonstrated the importance of the 'community' notion by deploring that his eldest daughter, Mei-Lan, refused "to join the Buddhist community" unlike his two other children. As they literally bring people together, Catholic masses and Buddhist gatherings are inherently communal (Wang et al., 2015).

A possible explanation for the Chinese conversion wave to Christianity posits that, as Christianity is the dominant religion in the country of reception, Chinese immigrants tend to adopt it as a means to integration or even assimilation (Yang, 1999). However, if assimilation was the leading motive, then why did they not opt for a Flemish (or other) Protestant Church instead? Why did they not try to become a member of a Flemish church community, instead of choosing for mono-ethnic Chinese churches? Surely, language might have played a crucial role as most Chinese involved with churches in Flanders possess only limited knowledge of Dutch, though the argument is still not convincing. After all, few people in Flanders are still

practising Christians and evangelical Protestantism is not considered very popular, which means that Chinese migrants' conversion might rather differentiate them from dominant society more than uniting them.

In line with the findings of Cao (2005), who collected ethnographic data in a New York Chinatown church, I discovered that the Protestant churches in Antwerp often made use of the Chinese family metaphor in their discourse. By extending the notion of kinship, they tried to rebuild interpersonal relationships amongst their members. For the interviewees who indeed viewed the religious community as an extended or surrogate family (cf. Cao, 2005), membership of this newly established Chinese community brought emotional and social support. This was true for the Chinese parents, but in the same extent also counted for youngsters as Jacob, Li-Na, Li-Zhi or others pupils that I spoke to during focus-group discussions. For them, the youth meetings and Sunday schools offered opportunities to build networks with other youngsters and to talk to Chinese peers about their daily life experiences, including school life, away from parental presence and control.

At first sight, for some Chinese immigrants, especially new arrivals, building a social network within the Chinese community sometimes appeared to be the initial or lead motive to go to church, much more than that actual faith played a role. This was not always appreciated as such by the church ministers. Yang (1999) and Cao (2005), who posited various possible explanations for Chinese migrants' conversion to Christianity, indeed also refer to the social need of Chinese migrants for networking within the own community and their need for ethnic belonging. But then, Yang (1999) asks, are there not enough other Chinese organisations or sites where they can meet, without having to adopt a new religion? This is also what Yue seemed to believe.

> Yue: For them, coming to the church is also kind of a social event where they can meet other people. But I always tell them: "If you like meeting other people, then go to the Chinese Association. Coming to the Church for years and still not knowing God, that's just a waste of time". I say that quite literally to them, yes.

4.2.3. Christianity as part of novel Western culture

Although the Christian doctrine has lost much of its popularity in Flanders, especially among young people, for many Chinese in and beyond modern China, Christianity is not conservative but rather considered a part of novel Western culture (Yang, 1999). The underlying image of Christianity as part of Western imperialism in the 19th century and thus the realm of knowledge, prestige and progress appears to loom large in the minds and hearts of the Chinese. Respondents in this study echoed this stance in various accounts.

> Anthropologist: Why do so many Chinese immigrants become Christian? What is their motive?
> Yue: Well, they think…uh…it's something novel to them. Some people just think: "Oh, it's a new thing and the countries where people believe in Jesus…well, they are all rich countries…So, maybe I should also become a Christian?... [laughs] As I said before, when I ask them about Jesus, they don't know the first thing about him…

> Chen Gao: Hmm, being Catholic…hm… It can be fun because then, for example, you can make your first and solemn Communion and you can have a church marriage. That is so traditional in Belgium, actually even in Europe. So yes, actually it is not bad to have a religion. I think that being an atheist would be boring.
> Anthropologist: You can always throw a big party instead of getting married in church?
> Chen Gao: But that is so…. hmm…but for example, your Communion…that's something out of the ordinary…it's something special.

Nevertheless, although Christianity has never been an indigenous religion among the Chinese, this does not mean that Christianity is entirely new in China. It is in fact a fruit of the Western missionary movement of the last century and a half. Important, is that when Protestantism was spread in China, the Chinese culture was said to be already imbued with religious folk beliefs and practices dating back to antiquity that were in fact very similar to those of Protestantism itself (Hunter & Chau, 2007). Prayer to spiritual beings or the notions of sin, suffering, and salvation being only a few examples. Many of these ethno-religious beliefs and practices are still very much alive today, also within the Chinese diaspora. According to Hunter & Chau (2007), there were especially two areas between which a striking congruence was noted by the first Christian missionaries, namely between Christian and Confucian morality. They write:

> A particular feature of Confucian, and almost all Chinese moral teaching, was the emphasis on filial piety and respect to seniors as the root of all human duty. Thus missionaries in the early twentieth century followed a long tradition when they called for 'virtues' as honesty, sexual restraint, self-sacrifice, hard work and abstention from alcohol. (Hunter & Chau, 2007, p. 156)

Between 1949 and midst 1970s, though, the Communist regime severely suppressed institutional religion and ideologically remoulded the Chinese society. It therefore appeared that by the end of the 1970s, religion in China had vanished. In reality, however, various people in China secretly continued to carry out their religious beliefs and practices of whatever kind, as also witnessed by Chen Gao.

> Chen Gao: My family in China is Catholic, my father and my father's relatives. But yes…due to the political conditions in China, everything had to happen in secret. From the 1950s on, Catholicism was prohibited. There were no churches anymore, no masses, nothing. I was born in 1957, but a secret, underground priest baptized me.

Although, according to Hunter & Chua (2007), the Chinese Communist Party provided a distinctive new impetus to concepts of morality through repeated media exhortations to work hard, to minimize personal gain and to sacrifice oneself for future generations, the Cultural Revolution clearly had left China in a spiritual vacuum. Many Chinese were deeply disillusioned with Marxism and a lack of morality amongst its rules. And although Confucian tradition was and still is undoubtedly very strong in China, at the same time many people deplored a loss of morality within broader Chinese society. The economic reformation had urged many people into an increased focus on material wealth and new perspectives on sexuality, gender and general authority. This complex and confused picture of morality has paved the way for a rapid revitalization of Protestant Christianity, which apparently has spread much faster than other religions. To many Chinese, also in the Diaspora, Christianity represents the religion that promotes harmony in the family and good relationships with other people as well as hard work and abstention from criminality (Hunter & Chau, 2007). It might be exactly this perceived compatibility of evangelical Christianity with core Confucian moral values of family, work and education, including filial piety, duty and perseverance that makes it so attractive to many Chinese immigrants, including the ones in this study (cf. Woo, 2010; Yang, 1999).

Throughout their narratives, it became clear that different Chinese parents somehow struggled in raising their children in a Western society that tends to focus strongly on individual freedom, critical thinking and authoritative parenting. To mitigate the resulting intergenerational conflicts and misunderstandings, they turned to evangelical Protestantism. Some of them also hoped that the connective relationship of the religious community would prevent their youngsters from going astray. This religious boundary-crossing – which is different from ethno-cultural boundary crossing (Leman, Stallaert, Choi, & Lechkar, 2010) - provided them with support in parenting and nurturing the second generation.

> Pupil (group interview): When we were still living in Holland, we went to church every Sunday because we lived there and…yes, because my mom didn't want us just hang around and watch TV during the entire weekend or to go out with friends. Now, I have enough work to do for school, so most of my time is spent on that.
> Anthropologist: And do you still go to church in Belgium?
> Pupil 1: No, but my parents still do.
> Pupil 2: I still go to the Protestant church on Sunday.
> Pupil 3: Me too.

> Protestant minister: We talk to the youngsters. We talk to them about how things are going for them, for example if they are getting along with their parents or about how things are going at school. When there are conflicts, we help them to find a solution.

> Yue: Chinese children nowadays are less obedient; they have less respect for elder people. Yes, they have their own culture, which is a mix of Chinese and Belgian. Many parents struggle with that. In church or after church hours we talk about that to each other. I know a little bit of their (children's) culture and I also know about Chinese culture, and together we with them (the parents) we search for solutions. That is not easy eh. I advise the parents to listen more to their children, and to trust them more. My parents – and maybe also the Western parents before – were very strict and they often beat us. But that's not good…[laughs] …it's not allowed here eh to hit your children! So, I tell them not to do that anymore and to be more patient with their children. Actually, in China too many things have changed. There's only one child in the family and …hoh…they are like princes or princesses. So, they too have little respect for their parents. A lot has changed.

In her recent study of the socioeducational integration of Chinese youth in Quebec, Sun (2013) likewise found that Christianity appeared to be able to democratize parent-teen relationships. She speaks of a shift from family duty to religious piety and writes that "through the language of Christian discipleship rather than family duty, these churches are able to help the parents disciple their children". She nevertheless also remarks that

"Christianity does not eradicate or reject traditional values such as filial piety, but preserves the spirit" (p. 254). In other words, Christian religiosity allows Chinese youngsters to honour their parents and to strive for educational success as an act of obedience to God rather than of filial piety. In the same sense, Cao (2005) speaks of the mechanism of 're-authorization'. According to Cao (2005), traditional authorities often get undermined through the migration process. In their search for new forms of parental authority, Chinese migrants find an analogy between the worship of Christ and the respect for the head of the family.

> Yue: I have an uncle and he's very rich and he has two sons. He has a lot of wealth now but his life is just an empty box. His eldest son keeps living in the parental house and all he does is begging his father for money. He doesn't respect his father. My uncle is 73 now and he really feels very lonely. He doesn't say so, but you just see it. My sisters too…to them religion is not important. "I always tell them: you have a lot, really a lot of possessions, but it's all vain. Look at your uncle. You should take religion more seriously, especially also with your kids."

4.2.4. Ethnicity and religion: a convoluted dance

For the Chinese Christian informants, the conversion has not altered their ethnic identity, but rather reinforced it. According to Woo this opaque entrenchment of religion and ethnic identity is the result of what he calls the "axis of syncretism-synthesis", or "the traditional Chinese practice of integrating new religious ideas" (2010, p. 155). He goes on to state that throughout Chinese history, the boundaries between ethnic and religious identity, beliefs and practices have always been weak. Instead, most of Chinese popular religiosity has been determined not by a specific religious doctrine of a chosen people, but by family-, and clan-based concerns, such as filial piety and the perpetuation of the family line (Chan, 2005; Iwamura, 2014). Moreover, Chinese folk religion is said to be diffuse, eclectic and syncretic, and thus open if not stimulating acculturation (Chan, 2005; Woo, 2010). According to Woo (2010) all this is well demonstrated by the ways in which diasporic Chinese worldwide prevail in the practices of ancestor worship and appeasement of spirits, by which new elements/figures or added to shrines depending on the local context or the family's biography.

Also Hunter & Chau (2007, p.8) speak of "Protestant/folk religion syncretism. According to them, China is now going through a process of Sinification of Protestantism in the same way it did with Buddhism, in the sense that Chinese society transforms alien

traditions into patterns with which the Chinese people feel most comfortable. Take also for example the concept of reciprocity. While in orthodox Christianity one is expected to obey God, with Protestant communities around the globe the traditional Chinese concept of petitionary prayer in return for divine favour with regards to health, safety and overall success in life clearly remains apparent. Chinese Protestantism is thus to be seen as the result from an interesting blending of the old and the new. In this sense the conversion to Christianity for immigrant migrants requires a reorientation rather than a rejection of the past.

The latter analysis of the connection between ethnicity and religion with diasporic Chinese helps to explain two other notable phenomena as encountered during the fieldwork. First of all, it elucidates why interreligious marriages within the Chinese community - also within the Chinese families in this research - are so common and considered non-problematic. That is to say: between Asian religiosity (popular or institutional) and Western Catholicism. Secondly, it also helps to clarify why the narratives of the parents and children who claimed to be either secular, 'only a little religious' or 'truly Christian', were still interlaced with signs of popular Chinese religiosity. Overall, as Chinese popular religiosity does not fit into the category of conventional and institutional religion (Chan, 2005; Iwamura, 2014; Woo, 2010) most respondents in this research did not equate their traditional religiosity with religion, but alternately with 'culture' or 'philosophy'.

> Terry: My grandmother is really like traditional Chinese. Every time when we go back to Hong Kong with her, we have to do all kinds of stuff, like lighting incense to let the ancestors know that we're back or that we leave again. Or when we take the plane. And, also with All Souls' Day.
> Anthropologist: So, your grandmother, is she Buddhist or what kind of religion does she have?
> Terry: Uh, I don't know, I think she's a little Buddhist, but not really extreme, just out of respect for the ancestors. If it were only that I would do the same, but this has little to do with religion. I don't have a religion.

> Anthropologist: You told me before you were Catholic. Does that mean that you truly believe in God?
> Chen Gao: No, actually I don't really believe; I am completely atheistic... Well no, I'm not a radical believer. I don't pray for example. Only when we go to the church with Christmas, I light a candle and then I pray a little to our relatives that have died. But it's more of a tradition. It's more cultural.

5. Summary

Departing from the socio-ecological and social constructionist epistemology, this chapter delved into the migration and family background of the Chinese pupils. Thereby specific attention was paid to the families' rationales for migration, parents' occupational position, both students' and parents' educational trajectories, as well as families' religious beliefs and practices and its role in the socioeducational integration of Chinese youngsters. The first part of this chapter focused on an empirical analysis of the families' migration histories. It was found that respondents' motivation(s) for migration varied strongly and partly depended on their birth region and emigration period. In many cases, the adduced arguments for the migration movement consisted of interlinked and overlapping elements, which respondents wished to escape from or hoped to escape to by way of engaging in the process of migration. The main push factors in the home country centred on political, economic and educational issues. It was clear that many families had gone through the experience of migration before. Prior to their move to Belgium, they or their direct ancestors had already fled from Mainland China as a result of the Communist regime's cruelties between 1949 and 1976, which had clearly left them with a family script of resistance to living under Chinese Communism. In addition, during the 1980s and 1990s, there was a general fascination among many Chinese citizens with the West, with the latter being imagined as a place of infinite professional and educational opportunities and ideological freedom. This, in conjunction with respondents' embeddedness in specific social fields - based on kinship and/or place of origin - created a migration bandwagon effect and the well-known phenomenon of chain migration. Although the pattern of chain migration was initially male-centred, from the second half of the 1980s onwards, Chinese women equally have become lead migrants. Further, various parents have put forth children's education as the main motive for migration, either as a response to their child's anticipated failure in the local education system or as a general means to their child's individual growth.

In contrast to what is commonly assumed, not all Chinese parents initially planned to stay on in Europe. This shows that a migration decision should never be understood as a one-off event but rather as a process, by which re-evaluations of the decision occur over the course of time. Similar processes have taken place among many foreign labourers from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey and Morocco who came to Belgium after WWII. Initially they came as guest workers, but eventually they remained. Overall, Chinese respondents' motivations for

migration had in common the desire for a more prosperous future, most often with the family group in mind. This reflects a general prominence among Chinese diasporans of the family's prosperity over that of the individual. However, at times such family-orientation as well as the notion of parental self-sacrifice partly resulted from the interplay between post-facto rationalization and traditional Chinese rhetoric of self-sacrifice, leading into a general discourse through which the importance of a good education for children was highlighted. It is important to question how suchlike discourses affect the parent-teen relationships, respondents' aspirations for the future, as well as family strategies for socioeducational integration. Answering those questions will form the nucleus of the following chapters.

A second section of this chapter focused on the families' educational status. It was found that the parents' educational attainment reflected a bell curve pattern with a majority having completed only senior secondary education. A vast set of factors had caused these recurrent lower educational levels. These included: political turmoil and restructuring of the education system (China), childhood poverty (Malaysia, Hong Kong), limited parental involvement due to parents' lower education levels (Hong Kong, Macau), personal difficulties in adapting to the new socio-cultural and educational environment (Belgium), and the role of Flemish educational guiding centres in orienting early Chinese immigrant pupils to the vocational or technical track (Belgium). With respect to the pupils' school trajectories it was found that unlike many children belonging to lower SES or migrant families, all of them had been enrolled in pre-school education. Most of them also had passed through an untroubled primary school trajectory, with only a minority having to repeat one year of schooling. In secondary education the majority of pupils had started in the A-stream, by which eventually more than one third moved into the technical track. One in five students have repeated at least one year of secondary education and one girl had prematurely left secondary school without obtaining any qualification.

Data regarding parents' occupational status showed a general trend of employment within the confines of the own ethnic community, with a clear predominance of self-employed entrepreneurs (catering and others). Within that process, *guanxi* or interpersonal networks - with kinship as the most powerful one – has played a decisive role. This relates to the chain migration patterns as mentioned in the analysis of families' migration history and also gives away a significant intertwining of financial, social and labour capital, or 'ethnic capital' as a relative means to risk management. However, the 'cultural model' does not

sufficiently explain Chinese immigrants' apparent professional confinement to the own ethnic community. To some extent, the entrepreneurial drive and discourse with some of the entrepreneurs should also be understood as a negotiation with barriers encountered on the regular labour market, which included language difficulties, non-recognition of qualifications and structural discrimination. An interesting phenomenon in this respect is that of the so-called *frietchinees*. While in media the term has often been used to refer to the successful integration of Chinese immigrants, it also mirrors persisting stereotypes in Flemish society vis-à-vis the Chinese who at the group-level remain looked upon by native Belgians as the ultimate 'other'. Moreover, various Chinese entrepreneurs seemed to be prone to a relative inferiority complex, particularly when former Chinese peers and relatives in the homeland were taken as a reference point. After all, many of the latter had been able to obtain 'better' socioeconomic positions owing to China and Hong Kong's rapid economic growth, while they themselves had gone through downward social mobility. As such, various parents considered the ethnic entrepreneurship as a long-term family strategy for upward social mobility and an act of self-sacrifice rather than a straightforward career choice. At the same time they considered this to be a distinguished feature of Chinese parenting, which they contrasted with the so-called western focus on self-fulfilment. In addition, various parents gave away an openness to mobility by moving to different places in Flanders or by turning to China in their search for qualitative job opportunities. In case of the latter this clearly transcended a mere desire for a return to the homeland. Taking all this into account, it is thus important to look at the impact of parents' socioeconomic status and the concomitant familial experiences and future perspectives on the establishment and negotiation of family strategies for education.

Finally, in the last section of this chapter, a glance was casted at the role of religion in Chinese families' social and educational integration. In line with other scholarly findings on the religious orientation of Chinese communities in the diaspora, the religious affiliation of the Chinese families in his study appeared to be very diverse, with a majority being atheist and a significant minority being Buddhist, Taoist or Evangelical Protestant. Several respondents belonging to the 'religious' group had converted to their religion only after immigration and were affiliated to ethnic Chinese religious institutions in Flanders. These institutions appeared to fulfil different functions and roles regarding the families' socio-educational integration. First of all they were important sources of practical and socio-emotional support, which helped families cope with adaptation to a new social environment.

Secondly, they were also important sites for bonding within the own ethnic community, which was being reinforced by ministers' recurrent use of the family metaphor. Moreover, although to some respondents Christianity was attractive as it was considered part of novel Western culture, it is clear that to many Chinese families the appeal of Christianity also lay in its perceived congruence with traditional Confucian moral values of family, work and education, including filial piety, perseverance and respect for authority. For Chinese parents who were struggling with intergenerational conflicts due their children's upgrowth in a Western culture, turning to evangelical Protestantism provided them with the necessary support in parenting. The religious boundary-crossing allowed for a mechanism of re-authorization to take place and for a reinforcement of the own ethnic identity. The Sinification of Protestantism points to a dialectical process in which ethnic cultural traits and the new religion have reciprocal effects on each other. It helps to strengthen the local ethnic attachment, but at the same time also brings families closer to western culture.

Building on the empirical findings regarding the migration and family background of the Chinese pupils in this study, in the next chapter I will take a closer look at parents' and pupils' aspirations for the future. The question is asked on how do their aspirations look like and by what and how they are shaped triggered or induced? Moreover, does their achievement behaviour operate on parallel tracks?

Chapter 7

Ambitions for the future

In order to understand the motivational dynamics of Chinese pupils' school achievement, in this chapter I take a closer look at the aspirations held by parents and pupils for the future and analyse how these are shaped by contextual factors, personal life experiences and cultural beliefs. I investigate the ways in which those aspirations overlap or collide and are re-negotiated over time. Do Chinese first and second-generation youngsters value the same goals as their parents, and if not, how do they deal with these intergenerational differences? For the most part, this chapter is concerned with the purpose and causes of ambitions for the future, and as such largely elaborates on findings of the previous chapters.

1. Introduction

Internationally, scholars have shown that future aspirations and expectations significantly impact a vast number of important elements, including household priorities, ethnic and gender relations (Kipnis, 2011) as well as educational attainment of children (Hirtt et al., 2007; Li, 2001a; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Ogbu, 1990; Terwel, Rodrigues, & Koot-Dees, 2011; Qian & Blair, 1999). The extent to which a pupil believes he or she should attain a higher level of education leads to a certain attitude towards schools (Hirtt et al., 2007) and affects not only pupils' motivation, but also the actual effort they put toward that goal (Kerckhoff, 1976, in Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Hirtt (et al., 2007) further argues that youngsters with a negative attitude towards school will be affected more by failures and discouragement than those who believe in the opportunities that education can offer. Whereas the first group tends to reinforce the exclusion that arises from the failure, the more optimistic youngsters will accumulate positive experiences and create an even more optimistic attitude towards schooling.

Of course, ambitions do not exist in a vacuum. If anything, Li (2001a) argues, they need to be contextualized because they are always conditioned by complex interactions between cultural, structural and historical circumstances. On the whole, aspirations are subject

to the influence of a variety of factors, including cultural values, past academic performance, family variables, a family's socio-economic position, parental expectations, gender, acculturation patterns and ethnic background (Archer, Halsall, Hollingworth, & Mendick, 2005; Li, 2001a; Ogbu, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Qian & Blair, 1999). With regard to the latter, Portes & Rumbaut (2006) found that Chinese immigrant-respondents in the United States clearly exhibited much higher aspirations than Jamaican, Filipino, Cuban, Mexican or Laotian pupils and their parents. Moreover, many of the aforementioned factors were also found to bring about a vast gap for immigrant youth, especially from the first generation, between initial aspirations and actual educational achievement (Kirk, Lewis, Lee, & Stowell 2011; Qian & Blair, 1999).

In addition, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and Kirk et al. (2011) distinguish between 'aspirations' on the one hand and 'expectations' on the other hand. Whereas the first notion relates to what people subjectively desire to happen, expectations on the other hand denote more concrete and realistic views on what people suppose will happen. According to Portes & Rumbaut (2001, 2006) these two notions do not necessarily coincide, but on the contrary often diverge, especially with more disadvantaged immigrant children. Kirk and colleagues (2011), for example, found clear distinctions between the expectations and aspirations of African-American pupils, by which the former appeared to be specifically lower. By contrast, this discrepancy was found to be rather small with Chinese-Americans (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Notably, according to Buruma (2007), the Chinese word denoting the verb 'to hope' can also mean 'to expect', depending on the context. It is also important to note, according to Portes & Rumbaut (2001), that it is mostly people's expectations that constitute the actual basis of behavioural choices and educational strategies.

Therefore, contrary to most studies on the educational trajectories of immigrant youngsters in Flanders, I do not conclude with, but instead set out from an analysis of youngsters' and parents' ambitions for the future. This chapter is divided into different subsections. First, I take a closer look at how the pupils interpret and conceptualize the general notion of 'success'. As the latter is inherently loaded with existing tensions between subjectivity (morality) and objectivity (norms), and thus with context, from a socio-ecological perspective it is crucial to detect the different elements that are central to respondents' definitions in order to genuinely understand their ambitions for the future. Following Becker (1998) I also take into account the concept's relational dimension by analysing to what or

whom respondents oppose in their definitions of success. The next subsection then zooms in on the specific expectations and aspirations as expressed by the Chinese pupils and parents involved.

2. Defining success

At different points during the inquiry pupils shared with me their interpretations of "a successful life". Concurrently, throughout their narratives on achievement goals they also reflected on the question whether or not they considered themselves on the road to reaching success. Many of their narratives appeared to coincide with one another.

> Kristina Wu: A successful future is having a job, a lot of money, and a fixed monthly wage. I want a big house and a good family, a relationship, a husband and children. And friends. That's it. I don't know if I will reach that though. My school results are not always so good and I don't have many friends in Belgium, but that is my fault as I tend avoid most contact. But that will change in the future.

> Sheng-Du: I will be successful when I have a good life. Not that I have to be rich, but still the level that you have everything, you understand? A good health is also important. A good job of course is also important.

> Ning: I want to establish a career, then marry and then have kids, in that order. I have only just begun taking the route, I still have to study a lot, but I believe I'm on the right path.

> Terry: I want to be able to enjoy my job, even if it's hard work. You know, I am not as lazy anymore in school as I used to be. And of course, I also want a partner. For now, I want to enjoy my school years, and later also my job.

> Sophie: A successful life is to find a good job that you like doing and by which you earn a lot of money, well…enough anyway. And family, that is usually the most important. Everything comes after that. First I want to have a good job, and then I would live together with my partner, then marry, then buy a good house and then I want kids. I hope I will realize that. I hope so. You know, my grades… they're not always good.

In the definitions of a successful life, as given by the young people here, three main elements are paramount. First, on the basis of their statements it appears that most pupils desired a good and pleasant job that had to lead to a (upper) middle-class lifestyle, characterised by sufficient material wealth. This finding is, of course, not unique to Chinese

youngsters. Hermans (1995) as well as Antrop-González and his colleagues (Antrop-González, Vélez, Garrett, & Baldwin, 2011) came to similar conclusions for Moroccan students in Flanders. A second element present in Chinese youngsters' conception relates to the social dimension of success. Primarily they considered family pivotal, but also the establishment of a circle of friends or acquaintances; a finding that extends to previous studies (Salili & Mak, 1988) claiming that this reflects typical Chinese values. Thirdly, regardless of generational status and study track – the bulk of Chinese youngsters allotted a central role to education for the road to success, reflecting elevated pro-school values. This also became very apparent when youngsters discussed the people whom they considered to be their role models, as well as those they did not strive to emulate.

> Anthropologist: Are there people that you look up to, people that you consider successful?
> Sheng-Du: I used to know people in the sixth year in school and they were very smart. I always wanted to be so smart.

> Sophie: There's this teacher in my school. She's still quite young, 28 or 29 or so, but she has many qualifications. Yes, I look up to that. It's great to be able to study like that and have many diplomas. So, in the future I also want to be something…someone. And I also look up to someone like you, you know. I mean, you are also young and you're working on a PhD. These are the people I really look up to. I want to be like that once. I want to have multiple diplomas and be successful. That is what I aim for. I want to be like that when I grow up, not someone who doesn't know anything. Yeah, I also want people to look up to me when I am outdoors [Laughs]. I don't want to be considered vulgar. There are people of whom I think…oh my god… our former tenant for example, the woman was 21 and her teeth were all tarnished and she had 5 children or so, with different men. And I believe she was also addicted to gambling. I really don't want to become like her! In any case I must pursue higher education and that is also what I want. I don't want to start working right away. My neighbour, she's 20 or so and she already works fulltime in a day-care. To me this is…well yes, this is her life now, in the day-care centre, forever and ever. And only after forty years you can retire. This is absolutely not what I want. I really wish to do more with my life than just that…

> Anthropologist: Ok, something else now. Your sister, does she serve as an example to you?
> Amber: No. We have a very different style and the grades of my sister are not good. She's not stupid, but she doesn't study. I do mind a little about studying, she doesn't, she doesn't put any effort to it. So she can't be my role model.

The role models brought forth by the youngsters strongly related to their desired educational and professional futures. Throughout the myriad of pupil narratives on success,

the value of a good education was mentioned ubiquitously. Therefore, not surprisingly, Chinese pupils clearly looked up to people with higher educational levels. Although these findings are significant, in themselves they do not shed much light on what it is exactly that Chinese youngsters aspire to for the future, nor does it elucidate the ways in which these pupils construct and negotiate specific strategies in conjunction with their surroundings. Therefore each of the elements, as highlighted here by the students, will be further deconstructed and tied in with earlier findings in order to come to a thicker understanding of the roots of Chinese families' educational strategies.

3. Family formation and concomitant responsibilities

3.1. The ideal married life & familialism

Internationally scholars argue that a supportive home environment and family stability are strong determinants of children's aspirations for the future, the involvement of parents in children's schooling, and thus of children's general development and educational attainment (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Qian & Blair, 1999; Qin et al., 2011). One aspect of stability is family intactness, which according to Qin and colleagues (2011) is very much characteristic of Chinese families, much more as compared to Whites. Indeed, for the most part the pupil respondents in this study were living in regular, nuclear families with both biological parents and siblings present. The size of the families ranged from two (mother + child) to six (parent couple + 4 children). Occasionally other relatives resided in the house as well, whether or not temporarily. In three families the paternal grandmother lived halftime with her son's nuclear family, while the remaining months she spent in the country of origin. In two other families cousins were offered temporary accommodation in the family's house. Generally I found that pupils' family conditions preponderantly displayed stability. These findings are consistent with most previous research on Asian immigrants – Chinese in particular - showing the latter's high validation of traditional marriage and family life (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Yang, 1999).

> Father of Sophie & Julie: Everybody holds a different vision of what success means. To me it's important to have a good family and to have everybody stay together. I want my children to grow up happily and to be left with good memories of their childhood years. Then I am happy. Some people

equate being successful with being rich. I don't. Many rich men have multiple girlfriends and abandon their families. Yeah, ok, you have a lot of money, but when your family is not complete, in my opinion you're not successful.

Mother of Li-Na & Li-Zhi: To my sisters religion is not important. I always tell them: "You own much, much, much property, material wealth, but all that's hollow. My uncle too, he is very rich and he has two sons. But his family is like a hollow box. The eldest one is forty-four years old now and keeps asking his father for money. My uncle does give him the money, because he hasn't got anything else to give. He doesn't connect with his children. He is seventy-three now and he's really lonely. He doesn't say so, but I can clearly see it.

Traditionally, the Chinese show a very strong preoccupation with the family, a position by some authors referred to as 'familialism' (Geense & Pels, 1998; Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Ong, 1996). Within Confucian thinking, the family is seen as the basic unit of all humanity and the foundation for sustaining the community and the state (Lau-Clayton, 2014). In Confucian tradition, the household is structured according to a strongly hierarchical and patrilineal descent system within which children and youngsters owe their parents, elders and ancestors respect and obedience (Chan, 2005; Geense & Pels, 1998; Pels, Distelbrink, & Postma, 2009; Vogels, Geense, & Martens, 1999), a guiding ethic that in Confucian philosophy is usually referred to as *xiao,* or filial piety (Chen, Chen, & Zheng, 2012). Generally, within the Confucian upbringing a strong emphasis is put on instilling a sense of responsibility in children for the honour and reputation of the family, living or dead. One central way for children to achieve this is, is through hard work and by giving evidence of educational success (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006). Within the patrilineal family structure, the man is charged with the responsibility to provide for his family - including his wife, children and elderly parents – while the wife is given the role of the main caretaker of children. Until relatively recently, in Chinese society divorce was considered taboo and thus an extreme rarity. Consistent with this tradition only in two households the marriage between the parents was found to have ended in divorce, of which one occurred prior to the parent respondent's migration to Europe. As noted in the previous chapter, Yun, Ning's mother, had become a single mother shortly after Ning was born. When her son was fifteen she remarried a Belgian man but eventually ended up divorcing him as well after an unhappy marriage that was marked by alcohol abuse and violence. The marriage of Lou's parents, on the other hand, came to an end after his father had accepted a job as dean at a Chinese university department and subsequently left Belgium. His mother too remarried a Belgian man. Although some

parents in this research seemed to have become more open to divorce, serial monogamy or alternative ways of family formation, most still felt largely negative about it. This might partly explain why for quite some time Lou's mother appeared considerably secretive about her new marriage and didn't want anyone to know about her new baby on the way.

> Mother of Chen Gao: The family, the mother and the father and the children, that is the most important thing in the world. I told Chen Gao that he should not get a girl from divorced parents, because I believe that such a girl will have missed out on some important upbringing. She will probably think that a divorce is normal. I don't agree. When Chen Gao establishes his own family, it ought to be forever. That's what I always tell him. It's forever, yes. Every person has his strong and weaker sides and as a couple you always have to negotiate and jointly search for a solution. Not getting a divorce, no. For example, my husband and I, we have a lot of discussions, but until now, we still love each other. I cannot live without my husband. There's always a solution.

Despite the apparent opposition to legal separation, currently the sacred nature of marriage in Chinese culture seems to be subject to change, as witnessed by China's vigorously increasing national divorce rate. This upward trend is the result of an interplay between different factors, including the increased number of highly educated and financially independent females within the PRC, easier divorce procedures, the eradiation of traditional views, and not in the least the one-child policy that, according to many, has given rise to the "Me-Generation" or the post-1980s generation that is often labelled as "selfish" and "unwilling or incapable of compromise"[91].

In the following quote, Li-Zhi's and Li-Na's mother, Yue, reports on her work as a community interpreter in Antwerp during which she indeed observed a sharp increase of the divorce rate with Chinese newcomers. The way in which she expresses her disapproval of this modern phenomenon and her perception of the association between Chineseness and family (in) stability is significant, as demonstrated below.

> Yue: People in China have become much more individualistic. You can see this for example in the number of divorces. It's huge! Nowadays, out of ten couples, nine get a divorce! Yes, it's truly troublesome. First I didn't know and I felt 100% Chinese. I was really satisfied with my identity. But now? In my job I often talk to Chinese patients in the hospital. There is this one woman; recently she presented a man to me, of which she claimed it was her husband. However, after having more thorough

[91] Source: http://geography.about.com/od/chinamaps/a/Chinese-Divorce-Rate.htm.

conversations with her and getting to know her better, it appeared that he was not her husband at all. He has a family of his own in China, so a wife and kid; and she does too.

Anthropologist: But they both live here without their families?

Yue: Yes, here. They both work in Belgium. And they think it's really ok to have a second partner like that. In their minds it's like a normal thing to do. Oh! So, they came to Belgium separately and they met here, in a restaurant or in their jobs, I don't know. Incredible! I'm blown away by it. When I talked to her about it, she was really mad with me. She said: "You don't understand me, actually he's the best man for me". I said: "What will you do when his wife and child come here? What happens then with your relationship?" Imagine, murders can happen in such cases. Terrible. She said: "No, no, no, when his wife comes, I will give him back". Give him back? Just like that? That's just impossible! I don't believe that for a second. But you know, these things happen more and more, especially with the newcomers. It's like they've lost their minds. Incredible. And imagine, even their kids know about the situation. There are just no boundaries anymore. The Chinese newcomers say that I am old-fashioned, that things have changed in China. My friends in China tell me the same thing. Ok, then I am an old-fashioned Chinese woman.

Most of the Chinese parents in this study stated that they attached great importance to (parts of) their Chinese cultural heritage and Chinese identity. Not surprisingly, these statements often referred to social and cultural values, as they had existed in the home country before the parents' immigration to Europe. This phenomenon, of course, is not typically Chinese, but has been documented with numerous first generation migrants of many distinct ethnic backgrounds. Often these parents go to great efforts to transmit those values to their children or unconsciously pass them on through family socialization patterns and the family *habitus*. Consistent with scholarly knowledge on the topic, I found that in their definitions of success, Chinese youngsters repeatedly expressed their views on the importance of establishing a household of their own. All but three pupils appeared to aspire for the ideal married life, which according to most, included of a conjugal family, preferably with two children. Importantly, from their perspective the marriage ought to take place after obtaining a diploma and finding a good job, somewhere between the age of 25 and 28. Although the youngsters' professional ambitions clearly highlighted individual yearnings as having pleasure in one's work, jobs were equally considered as 'a means' to form a solid and stable base upon which the future nuclear family could be built. Regardless of gender and generational status, all youngsters had envisioned their future with the family in mind, revering the time-honoured central role of the family in Chinese culture (cf. Geense & Pels, 1998).

3.2. Apparent deviations & primordial consanguinity

On a total of twenty-six pupils, at first glance, three youngsters deviated from the general aspired picture of the conjugal family as outlined above. In his last year of secondary education, Tom (BSO) for instance, decided to marry his Chinese girlfriend; hence much earlier than the average marriageable age as postulated by most of his Chinese peers. Although I was unable to gather much information on his motives for marrying early, interview data revealed that his family was absolutely opposed to the marriage. This caused him, to use his own words, "a lot of trouble". The fact that he went through with his decision demonstrates a break in this family in the traditional pattern of filial piety and child respect and obedience. This was not the first time that Tom had 'broken' the rules at home. Interestingly, he denotes his deviant behaviour as 'Moroccanized', mostly resulting from peer influence at school, by which the latter had clearly altered his sense of family obligation and family identification for some time.

> Tom: I respect my family very much, really very, very much. At a certain point in time I was really acting Moroccan at home, but then my parents told me: "You will stop that attitude or you will not leave the house anymore". So, I stopped. At home I am a totally different person than at school.

Terry, the second pupil diverging from the 'ideal picture', stated she did not want to marry or have children. From her perspective, the profession she aspired – one that entailed physical mobility – just did not seem compatible with family care. At the same time she told that her mother's would not want to take on the role of caretaker of her future grandchildren when she retired, in contrast to what many grandparents in China and Hong Kong tend to do. This obviously does not give a decisive answer on the future behaviour of Terry or her parents. However, it does demonstrate an altering discourse on the link between the family ideology and future success. Moreover, from the recurrent contact with Terry, I also found that in contrast with most of her Chinese peers, she generally received a great amount of freedom to spend time outdoors with friends, and thus outside of the protective family circle. In general, Terry's parents were more lenient in their discipline, put less emphasis on filial piety and placed more importance on autonomy and independence for their children than most other Chinese parents in this research. As such they were also less outspoken regarding the promotion of marital roles and responsibilities.

Terry: I talked to my mom about that and she said: Hoh, you just do as you please.
Anthropologist: They don't expect you to marry or to have children?
Terry: No, they say: "When you have kids, don't expect me to take care of them". I said: "Gosh, mom!" But then she said: "I have spent already my entire life looking after two children. Not when I'm retired. No, thank you!"

Unlike Terry, who mostly glowed with self-confidence, Mei-Lan demonstrated much uncertainty about her future family life, in the same way as she appeared indecisive about her future career aspirations. Like Terry, she spent much time outdoors, but whereas Terry and her family's narratives displayed very little intergenerational conflict, for the most part Mei-Lan's stories were interspersed with discordance. Although her family was clearly important to her, she could not help but feel as if she was an outsider. In many of the conversation we had together she deplored the lack of understanding of the other household members. As a result she assigned herself an identity that she usually denoted as "much-less-Chinese than my family members", at times as "Flemish" and occasionally as "not part of any group", by which the latter markedly connoted her recurrent feelings of non-belonging. Unfortunately, in the case of Mei-Lan this resulted in a significant lack of self-confidence, which also became evident in the way she reflected on her ability to realize future family aspirations. Nevertheless, despite numerous conflicts with her parents and sister, she felt she still owed her family respect because in the end they were the ones that she could count on; something she regarded as one of the advantages of being part of a Chinese family to whom consanguinity is primordial. This is consistent with the earlier finding that although the Chinese youngsters occasionally commented in a giggling fashion on the customary practices of their (grand-) parents, they still considered it as their duty to show respect to the centrality of the consanguineal family. Despite the fact that Mei-Lan was clearly fighting for additional autonomy and independence, she had to maintain a degree of connectedness with her family in order to receive the necessary support (cf. Hardway & Fuligni, 2006), although her emphasis on familialism and familial duty did not lead to a greater level of identification with them (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006).

Mei-Lan: I think I am more Belgian. I do consider family important, just as they do, but I also reserve much time and space for friends. I don't like being at home. That makes me different I guess. And also, I know that in the future I am going to divorce. I just know myself. It's not that I often think about divorcing or marrying, because anyway I think I will not marry. I know I often cause trouble. For instance, when you are in a relationship and you are both totally aligned, and then always because of me

> – sometimes because I want it – a bad patch arises. I fight and mostly I am the cause of the fight. It's just that I'm sometimes sick of the daily grind. So, I think it would be very hard for my husband to live with me – if I ever marry – and if he wants to have a peaceful day. [Laughs] I am a very difficult person. I know that. Therefore, I sometimes think that I am more Belgian than Chinese. I know my parents love me, but I don't really feel it, probably because we communicate very little with each other. But, we do know that when something happens to one of us, we will be there for each other. You just know it's like that. This closer bond is probably typical of Chinese families, much more than it is of Belgian families at least. It's more or less predictable what can happen. For example with me: I can have financial problems. Then my father and sister say: "No matter what, we will support you". I guess that's love? My father says: "You have the blood of me and your mother in you" or something like that. So, it means I'm connected to them. It's not like something you can bisect, unless maybe you change every millilitre of blood in your body? [Laughs out loud].

Reference to the importance of blood ties was found in the narratives of many Chinese youngsters. It was considered the source of a sometimes stern, though unbreakable bond between parents and children. In this sense it also interesting to look at how pupils and their parents view elder care. Traditionally the Confucian interpretation of family and the concept of *xiao* underscored the importance of nurturing, in other words of children taking care of their elderly parents (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Vogels, Geense, & Martens 1999). In this study I found that although this long lasting disposition was still meaningful, for the interviewed parents it did not entail the expectation of residing together with their child's nuclear family at old age. Notably, various pupils did not totally oppose to this traditional way of elder care. Regardless of study track, SES or gender, they stated that although it would not be their first choice, they would be willing to take on this traditional role if necessary. This mirrors the traditional habitus of interdependence between generations (Wu, 2011), at least at the level of discourse.

3.3 'Parents by telephone' - Transnational parenthood

Thwarting the notion of the Chinese family ideal is the phenomenon of transnational parenthood. In this study, the children of six focal families had been living separately from their parents for a short or prolonged period of time. Lucas Lee, for instance, was born in Germany. At the age of four he went to live with his paternal grandparents and elder sister in China, while his parents were looking for an appropriate place to settle down in Flanders. Lucas returned to his parents two years later, just in time to start primary school. His sister,

who had entirely been raised by her grandparents in China, arrived in Belgium a year later at the age of twelve. Similarly, Lou, Wu Guo as well as Terry's sister had been sent to live with their grandparents in the home country for a period of one year, or in the case of Wu Guo: two times for a ten-month period. Terry's sister was two years old at the time; Lou - aged six - completed his first year of primary school there. Two other focal pupils, Kristina Wu and Xiaoya, grew up in Shanghai and Fuzhou respectively. In their early childhood their mother and father had migrated to Europe and had entrusted them to the paternal grandparents in the homeland. In both cases the transnational family arrangement was planned prior to the parents' immigration and it was only in 2008, at fourteen years of age, that both girls were reunited with their own parents in Antwerp.

The said life courses of these pupils are not unique. Amongst others, Mummert (2005) and Liu-Huang (2008) argue that globally increasing numbers of children are experiencing physical separation from parents due to economic, political and familial circumstances. With special reference to the Chinese Diaspora, other authors have referred to the rather recent phenomena of *astronaut families (taikongren)* and *parachute kids* or *satellite children* (Christiansen, 2003; Khoo & Mak, 2003; Man, 2013; Ong, 1996; Skeldon, 1994; Waters, 2005, 2009; Yeoh, Huang, & Lam, 2005; Zhou, 1998). The first notion (*astronauts*) refers to diasporans – typically the husband - who return to work in the homeland while their families remain abroad, or to diasporans who are constantly moving between their different homes for business reasons (Man, 2013). '*Parachute kids'* are children who are sent to or left behind in overseas countries to attend school while their parents remain in the homeland. Ma (2013) describes both diasporic phenomena as unique and unhealthy. Aihwa Ong speaks of "the outgrowth of family biopolitics" (1996, p. 748). She demonstrates that in the 1990s it became a common strategy for higher middle and upper class Chinese families to send children abroad in order to maximize family opportunities for capital accumulation.

Strictly speaking, the focal pupils in this study cannot be labelled as parachute kids since the direction of their movement is the reverse of that of the so-called satellite children. More apposite to the life stories of the focal pupils in this research is the more general term of "*transnational parenting"*, as coined by Man (2013). Man defines the latter as "arrangements in which childrearing activities belonging to the realm of the production and reproduction of the family are scattered across national borders" (2013, p. 2). In her study she points to the phenomenon of Chinese immigrant mothers in Canada who send their children back to the

home country as a result of their struggle to reconcile family and work. Geense & Pels (1998) made mention of similar practices with the Chinese community in the Netherlands. Consistent with the children in Man's study, the pupils in this research were left with grandparents or other relatives. Notwithstanding the supposedly intricate and precarious negotiations that have lead to the actual split of the households and despite parents' general discourses of "acting in children's best interest", the separation has undoubtedly taken some sort of toll on the family. Various pupils narrate that throughout their separation the contact with their parents overseas was limited. When Xiaoya departed from her home country to join her parents in Belgium, she hadn't seen them for more than three years. Such prolonged separation comes perforce with short- or long-term consequences for family cohesiveness and for the socio-emotional well-being of the family members involved, in particular that of the children.

Unfortunately this study did not allow me to identify and tenuously understand the intricacy of the transnational arrangements as parents tended to be quite evasive about the topic. However, given the relatively large number of families with temporary or permanent transnational parenting arrangements more attention from social scientists regarding this phenomenon is recommended.

3.4. Partner choice in marriage: endo- versus exogamy

Historically, intimate relationships have usually been endogamous in nature (Lalonde & Uskul, 2013). Although immigration and the formation of multicultural states creates opportunities for forming inter-ethnic relationships (Lalonde & Uskul, 2013), recent research nevertheless shows that traditional immigrant groups (Moroccans, Turks, etc.) in Flanders and the Netherlands often choose a marriage partner within the own ethnic group (Sterckx, 2014; Verhaeghe et al., 2012). However, in that they do not differ much from native Belgians whose openness to mixed marriages also appears small (Clycq, 2012, cited in Jalhay & Clycq, 2014). Mixed marriages can be defined according to distinct variables, including ethnicity, religion or country of birth. In official statistics, such as those from Eurostat, the definition entails a marriage of a native-born person with someone who is born abroad (Lanzieri, 2012). In this study, the notion of mixed unions is understood in a broader sense and also includes interreligious marriages and unions between immigrant people from different ethnic backgrounds.

According to Max Weber (1999), in all groups with a developed ethnic consciousness the existence or absence of intermarriage (*connubium*) is a logical result of attraction or segregation. Likewise, Eriksen (1999) and Guibernau and Rex (1999) write that ethnic groups who tend to have a belief in a common descent nearly always have ideologies encouraging endogamy, which clearly influences the incidence of sexual relations and of marriage, sometimes decisively. On the other hand, mixed marriages are commonly considered important indicators of or vehicles to immigrants' social integration (Kalmijn, 2015; Lanzieri, 2012). Vogels et al. (1999) even assumes it to be one of the last barriers to break down for ethnic minorities to become truly integrated. Intergroup marriages are seen to yield positive intergroup relations in a multicultural context (Lalonde & Uskul, 2013). Important here is the notion that intermarriage not only reflects the strength of group boundaries in society, but also is an engine of change in this respect (Kalmijn, 2015). Within this line of thought, it is believed that children who are born into a mixed marriage (immigrant-native) tend grow closer to the values and norms of the native society and therefore have a more advantageous socioeconomic position compared to immigrants (Kalmijn, 2015). Other researchers, however, have been rather critical regarding this link between intermarriage and integration and state that the reality is often much more complex and uncertain than is commonly assumed (Kalmijn, 2015). A recent study from the Netherlands on mixed marriages between the native white Dutch and people with Turkish of Moroccan origins for example showed that mixed marriages do not necessarily promote or lead to better integration of the minority groups (Sterckx, 2014). Sterckx argues that young immigrant people who engage in mixed marriages often come to stand apart from their own ethnic group. In many cases those marriages do not lead to stronger emotional ties between the family and friends of the partners. As such, those young people are not pioneers but instead just remain exceptions to the social norm of endogamy. In his study on the effect of intermarriage on the integration outcomes of 'mixed' children in four European countries (England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden), Kalmijn (2015) likewise points to persisting mechanisms of stigmatization and ethnic retentionism. Although his findings partly support the integration theory as 'mixed' children are found to differ from immigrant children in the sense that they have more social contacts with natives, greater language achievement and more liberal family values, these 'mixed' children also significantly remain different from natives with respect to their socio-cultural and educational integration.

All Chinese parents couples in this research had been the result of homogeneous marriages, except for two households as shown earlier. Throughout the Diaspora Chinese communities have been labelled as being fairly closed, for which various authors find proof in the low incidence of marriages outside of the own ethnic group (cf. Rijkschroeff, 1998 and Vogels et al., 1999 for the Chinese community in Holland). With respect to the youngsters in this study it is of course too early to proclaim anything on the topic with certainty. It is however interesting to take a closer look at the respondents' attitudes, aspirations and experiences towards inter-ethnic relationships.

In somewhat of a discord with the findings of Vogels et al. (1999), certainly not all Chinese parents in this study voiced a discursive preference for a Chinese in-law for their children, as many took a rather neutral stance. Several elements influenced the choice of marriage partner. One major and evident cause of the fault line between the two groups of parents revolved around language and communication with family members. Not surprisingly, it was mostly the parents with limited to no Dutch proficiency that preferred a Chinese son- or daughter-in-law. For these families, knowledge of the family's native language (Cantonese, Mandarin or a local dialect) was prerequisite to any form of communication. Cultural disparities constituted the second reason for desiring an in-group marriage for their children. Parents thereby mainly referred to differences in parenting styles, goal setting, general orientation (individualistic versus family-oriented) and ways of expressing love (direct versus indirect). In his study, Vogels (1999) suggests that as a result of the Chinese tradition of patrilocality, Chinese parents possibly consider it more important for their sons to marry a Chinese girl than for their daughters to have a Chinese husband. Although the study sample is too small to make sound statements on the issue, the data nevertheless assume that pupils' gender did not bring about major differences in parental attitudes. Also parents of female pupils expressed their preference for a Chinese husband for their daughters. Consistent with Chinese family ideology, Liling – although herself married to a Belgian man - justified her inclination for a Chinese in-law from her belief that Chinese men take more responsibility for the nuclear family than Western men as, in her perception, the latter are much more driven by individualistic values. As such she expresses her expectation of duty to support the family at all times. According to Liling, Chinese boys also prefer Chinese girls because they are gentler than Western women, a vision she appeared to share with various other Chinese respondents, including the mother of Lucas Lee.

Liling: It would be nice if she could have a Chinese husband. Normally Chinese men take more responsibility for the family. I found that in Belgium, in Western countries, most men - not everyone – are very independent and just take responsibility for themselves, and not so much for their wives or children. In China, adult men also take responsibility for the girls and for her family, which is nice. So, I would really like her to have a Chinese boyfriend.

Anthropologist: And do you mean a Chinese boy from China or a Chinese boy who was born and lives in Belgium?

Liling: If she can find a Chinese boy in Belgium, that would be the best, because then they would have a similar background. The boys from China are a little bit different.

Anthropologist: And are the Chinese boys in Belgium not too European and independent?

Liling: Most Chinese boys who grow up in European countries are still half Chinese and are different from Western boys. I can see that. And I know that most Chinese boys would also like to marry a Chinese girl. Normally they are a little bit more soft and gentle to the man. When a Chinese girl gets married, her family becomes the most important thing, forever. So, Chinese men like that. In Europe, men and women are all very independent. In Chinese culture we are much closer.

Lucas Lee: My parents prefer that I marry a Chinese girl, particularly my mom does. I don't really know why, but my mother thinks that Chinese girls are more kind. I always try to convince her that race doesn't matter. I think my sister and I have already convinced our father. To him it doesn't matter so much.

Apart from distinguishing between Chinese and Western men, Liling also expressed a strong disdain for black, Japanese, American and Muslim men; her words reflecting a clear act of ethnic boundary-setting.

Liling: I just say that when she grows up and she wants a boy, then just no Muslims, no black people, and no Japanese.

Anthropologist: Why not?

Liling: Because we are still Chinese and Chinese don't accept black people. And Islamic culture, that's because the culture is too hard on girls. When you become part of a Muslim family, you become like the slaves of the family. And Japanese…that is a historical thing. Most Chinese don't like Japanese. And for us, Chinese women, we don't like Japanese man. They are not normal; they have problems [Laughs]

Daughter of Liling: You also told me I could not marry an American, but I don't know why.

Liling: Because American people are too passionate. They get married, the passion disappears and they say goodbye. Separation. Yes, I'm still a typical Chinese woman. Inside, my thoughts are mostly Chinese. Sometimes, I talk to her [to the daughter] about it, and I respect her too; eventually she has to make the choice. Though I told her from the beginning: it's not nice to have such kind of people.

Even less than their parents, the majority of pupils in this study did not overtly express a preference for in-group marriage. After all, so they stated – especially in Ghent where the Chinese community is rather small – the opportunities for finding a Chinese partner are limited. Reversely, research has indeed shown that the larger and more concentrated the ethnic group is, the less likely will intermarriage occur (Sterckx, 2014). In addition, third parties, as for example other mixed couples, have also been influential, as illustrated by the following quote from Chen Gao.

> Chen Gao: Yeah, I thought about it before: What if my future wife is Belgian? [Laughs] Well, my kids would have a different appearance and also be culturally different. Not that it would be hard, but still they would be different. It's not that I'm afraid of that, but…how should I explain? I assume it might cause difficulties in the upbringing of our children. Oh no, I take back my words. No. I guess, in between a couple you always have to compromise. Is it not? Plus, I live in Belgium, so the probability of me marrying a Belgian girl is much bigger. I have much less contact with Chinese youngsters than with Belgian youngsters.
> Anthropologist: You know, what strikes me is that I do often see Chinese boys with Chinese girls.
> Chen Gao: Oh, yes? It's possible. I don't know.
> Anthropologist: So to you, being Chinese or not doesn't really matter?
> Chen Gao: No, not really, no. Recently I was at the marriage of a Chinese man with a Belgian woman. They were friends of my parents. And actually I really liked that. It was a Chinese marriage, in red, and with lots of noise. I also admire that couple. They are happy and they are stable.
> Anthropologist: Can I ask you a more intimate question? When you fantasize about girls…
> Chen Gao: Both! [Laughs] Yes.

Amongst the pupils who did express a preference for a Chinese partner, not all were able to explain the underlying logic of their choice. To a large extent arguments appeared to be related to perceived linguistic and/or cultural differences. From these youngsters' perspective, not only would in-group marriage facilitate the communication with their parents, it also had to safeguard them from potential difficulties resulting from a cultural gap, such as miscommunication or having to explain the ins and outs of specific thoughts, attitudes and behaviours. Interestingly, several of these pupils distinguished between boyfriends and husbands, by which only the latter had to be Chinese. Although most parents in this research clearly disapproved of youngsters entering in a relationship before they had reached official adulthood, many pupils secretly have had boy- or girlfriends. The ethnic background of these teenage partners has indeed been found to be diverse, being either native Belgian or Chinese.

Terry: For a boyfriend it doesn't really matter, but for a future husband I would prefer a Chinese as a matter of fact. It's just easier to communicate with a Chinese. Of course, if it would be a Belgian who can speak Chinese fluently, that would also be ok.

Jiali: You know what I would like to do? I would like to marry a Chinese. I don't think I will choose someone from another culture or country. It's just easier in the communication, also with my parents. Actually, I don't know the real reason for why I want a Chinese husband. I just do.

Amber: I prefer a Chinese man because Flemish and Chinese culture are really different and a Chinese man would understand me. With a Belgian man I would have to explain so many things. Like, when I go to the shop, he would probably ask me why I buy certain goods. Or I would keep getting the question: "Do all Chinese do that?" Or for example when we put candles in the room with incense sticks. Maybe some Belgians would know what it means, but I don't think many people in Flanders know about the fact that Chinese do this. A Chinese man would know, so I wouldn't have to explain everything all the time. And probably a Flemish man wouldn't be interested in it, or maybe he would find it creepy. I really don't want my boyfriend to find things creepy. Or maybe when we go to Hong Kong together, he would think it's too hot. I don't know. Maybe eh? Or maybe I'm just worried for nothing, but still.. [Laughs]. I also think that Belgians are raised differently than Chinese. For example, most Chinese children have to work at home and probably a Belgian man would find that weird. I just want someone who totally understands me, not someone who asks me if and why I eat rice everyday. I mean, I know that when you get to know each other, those kinds of questions disappear. But you know, the total number of potential questions is just so high!
Anthropologist: Have you ever had a Belgian boyfriend?
Amber: Until now I've only had one boyfriend now. It was with a Belgian guy and the relationship only lasted for two weeks. [Laughs]

In the previous chapter I have pointed out the fragmented religious composition and orientation of Chinese communities worldwide. In the same line I have referred to the opaque entrenchment of religion and ethnic identity as a result of the syncretism-synthesis-axis. As a result of this, interreligious marriages are common and generally considered non-problematic with many diasporic Chinese. With specific reference to the Chinese pupils and parents in this research, it was found that most respondents were indeed quite open to inter-faith marriage. In fact, several of the parent-couples themselves had been the result of an interreligious marriage, by which the combination of Buddhist-Christian was the most common. The lowest levels of openness were found among the more strict religious evangelical Protestant families, as for example the families of Li-Zhi and Li-Zhi, and Jacob. To those families, their religion and membership of the religious community took up such a central place in their daily lives that they did not believe in the feasibility of an interreligious marriage. Most respondents,

however, approved of a mixed marriage and could imagine them being married to someone from a different faith, from the socially accepted opinion that as long as partners did not impose their religion upon each other, this should not be a problem.

Anthropologist: Do you believe that two people with a different religion can marry?
Amber: Hm, I don't know many things about religion. It depends. I think it's possible, but when you believe and you are really true to your faith and you want the other person to become true to your religion as well, then it's not possible.

Anthropologist: Do you believe that two people with a different religion can marry?
Lucas Lee: I think they should be able to marry, yes. But then they have to show interest in the other person's religion and be able to discuss about it. It wouldn't work if someone believes: "my religion is the only true one". That wouldn't work. You have to be open to other opinions.

Anthropologist: Do you believe that two people with a different religion can marry?
Terry: Hm, I think it's difficult, because some religions really differ from one another. They really have opposite opinions, which could lead to quarrels and fights if those people are very religious, like extremely religious. But if they are only religious in a normal sense, like for example one is Christian and the other is Hindu, then that shouldn't cause much trouble. I am atheist, but in case my partner would be Christian, I would respect and accept that. But if he would try to convert me into a Christian, I would say: "No, don't even try because I really don't believe in God". And that would probably be the end.

Anthropologist: Do you believe that two people with a different religion can marry?
Chen Gao: Hoh…My personal opinion is that they can marry, yes.
Anthropologist: Could you imagine yourself marrying someone with a different religion?
Chen Gao: Yes.
Anthropologist: From whatever religion?
Chen Gao: But yes, it depends. If they are very radical, like Islam…no, wait… Jews cannot marry someone from another religion either…so, that's ruled out.
Anthropologist: But would you as a person be willing to marry a Muslim girl?
Chen Gao: So, a Muslim girl? Yes, if she can marry me and she truly agrees to marry me…But, wait, then she would wear a headscarf? Haha, I never really thought about that. I would not like that, but…I guess it's the inner beauty that counts?

Julie: I don't think religion is a big problem. I mean, many people here are Christians but they are not truly religious or practising. So, religion is not such a big thing here. But in case people are really, truly religious, then that might be a problem. For example, it would be hard for me to marry a…
Sophie: …a Moroccan or something.

Julie: …a person who is Muslim, because they…how many times is it? … they pray like five times a day or something?

Although most pupils and parents did not question a potential crossing of ethnic or religious boundaries in view of a marriage partner as long as partners' religious freedom was being respected, some respondents were regarding upon the latter as being problematic with adherents of Islam. These respondents identified Muslims with extreme forms of religious life and with little tolerance for and openness to other religious beliefs.

Father of Kristina Wu: Buddhist and Catholics, yes, they can marry. But with Muslims that's difficult because they want others to become Muslim too.

Father of Mei-Lan and Amber: Yes, of course people from different religions can marry. That's not a problem. The question is how strong the religion is in their minds.
Anthropologist: What do you mean?
Father: For example, when two people get married and when their religion is very, very strong in their minds, of course then it's not possible. When you're a Catholic who doesn't go to Church every Sunday and your partner is a Buddhist that also eats meat, there is no problem eh. You see? It all depends on how strong the beliefs are. So, I could not get married to a Muslim woman eh, that would be impossible. When I marry a Muslim woman, I would have to be Muslim too.

Throughout the research, this group of respondents also expressed or revealed other reasons for being resistant to a potential union with or in-laws belonging to ethnic groups that are affiliated with Islamic religion. Especially the parents within that group tended to justify their stance on the basis of negative experiences they have had with Muslims in the past. In most cases specific reference was then made to young people from Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds, as for instance in the following extreme case exemplified by Terry.

Terry: My parents told me: "You can marry whoever you want to, even a black person, but I don't want you to marry a Muslim". That's because in our former restaurant we had a Moroccan girl working for us. The day she dumped her boyfriend, he was Moroccan too, he came to the restaurant and he just shot the girl. She was very badly wounded, her uterus irremediably destroyed just for dumping her boyfriend. So no, they don't want me to be with a Muslim guy. And according to my parents, I don't know, Islamic girls are just supposed to stay indoors all day long and make babies. So, again, they don't want that for me.

Other parents spoke of less dramatic yet recurrent events they were facing: Muslim youngsters stealing goods from their shops, restaurants, on the streets, or in the schools of their children, and of Muslim youth shouting at them in public spaces. Partially based on those experiences these Chinese families had mentally installed a rather negative image of their Islamic city co-inhabitants. Moreover, it appeared that whereas these parents tended to make their sons resilient against potential or real harassment by Islamic peers by advising them to ignore the harassers and to act as the better person, daughters were more often saddled with fear, as was for example the case with Sophie. She however appeared to carry an inner struggle between an internalized fear and an awareness of existing prejudices and racism, something she did not want to be identified with.

> Anthropologist: In the future, would you like to live where you are living now?
> Sophie: Yes, I would like that, but it depends a little bit on how things will evolve here. If many things change for the worse, then I will want to move of course.
> Anthropologist: What do you think might change?
> Sophie: I don't know. It's not like I'm a racist or anything, but you know, my dad also thinks that Moroccan men are often dangerous and according to him more and more Moroccan people are coming to our town. So, that's not really ok.
> Anthropologist: So, would you go and look for a neighbourhood with less Moroccans?
> Sophie: I wouldn't know, because I have nothing against them, but I would not want to live in Deurne, for example. I feel unsafe there. It's not that they have done something to me, but only their glimpse makes me scared sometimes. Yes, and I know they are all probably really nice and I should not be scared, but it's just…. Yes, it's something I've learned at home. My father always tells me to be careful and stuff like that.

This group of Chinese parents distanced themselves from the Islamic minorities in Flanders and installed a boundary, both physically and symbolically in a Barthian sense (Barth, 1969). Although their children often have had positive experiences and friendships with Muslim peers at school on the individual level, negative experiences were much more attributed the a broader ethnic group of 'Muslims'. This negative image with these families of Islamic minorities, I argue, is continuously being reinforced by subtle and less subtle forms of prejudice and bias in media reports and political debates in which Islamic culture is generally represented as irreconcilable and Islamization as a threat to Western values. Moreover, the boundary setting was externalized not only in the parent's selection of a suitable partner for their child, but also in the way they (dis) approved of particular schools and peers, as I will discuss in the next chapter. To some point it was also reflected in the

family's settlement patterns, and more specifically in their avoidance of residential proximity with Islamic minority groups. In due course, as soon as their socio-economic position allowed them to, they relocated from poorer and ethnically diverse to more desirable neighbourhoods, which in various cases was predominantly white. This was, for example, the case with the families of Terry, Lei, Julian & Sam, and Lamchoi, whose choice for settlement in a particular area was dictated by its physical environment as well as by its ethnic composition. Thereby the absence of Muslim immigrants was equated to moral and physical safety. In reality this often entailed both a move away from the city centre and the 19th century city belt to satellite municipalities, and a spatial separation between work and living neighbourhoods.

> Terry: It's calm where we live now. There are not so many problems here. It's much better than our former neighbourhood.
> Anthropologist: Where did you live before?
> Terry: Close to Stuivenberg, in a real Moroccan and Turkish neighbourhood. That was really unsafe.
>
> Lamchoi: I like it where we live now. Although we now live in an apartment and I actually prefer living in a house, but there are much less foreigners and Moroccans here.

4. Elevated educational ambitions

Another key finding regarding Chinese youngsters' ambitions for the future has been that the majority aspired to high levels with regards to both their education and professional lives. Most pupils were not content with credentials that provided for a livelihood; instead they explicitly aimed for higher qualifications, preferably a quality university degree. To a certain extent this is not surprising, given that most pupils in this study were enrolled in general education (ASO), which *de facto* prepared them for a more academic pathway. The Chinese pupils from the technical track also aimed for higher academic credentials but appeared more inclined towards a university college education. In contrast, the minds of the two pupils from the vocational track, Mei-Lan & Tom, were inclined to work or reflected prevalent doubt about what to aspire to for the future. Strikingly, even with youngsters with a more unstable school trajectory, such as Terry, Sophie, Shing and Amber, their aspirations appeared to remain quite stable throughout the years. In addition I could observe that to a large extent children's aspirations coincided with those of their parents, which points to children's general internalization of their parents' high standards.

Lamchoi: After secondary education I want to study either electricity or electronics, and when I've graduated I would also like to study mechanics. That's possible, isn't it?
Anthropologist: To be honest: I don't know. Maybe your teachers are better placed to answer that question. But so, you want to continue studying after secondary education?
Lamchoi: Yes! Yes, as much as possible!
Anthropologist: University College or something else?
Lamchoi: Yes, definitely college; at least. I have to.
Anthropologist: You have to by your parents?
Lamchoi: No, no, yes, yes, my parents want that too, but I am also convinced that I have to. So, basically I still want to study for a long period.
Anthropologist: So you enjoy going to school?
Lamchoi: Ah, no! I don't like going to school, but I have to eh, if I want to find a good job later.

The pupils' responses to the TAT Card 7BM mirrored a similar narrative. Card 7BM shows an older man looking at a younger man who appears to be peering into space. The card usually generates information regarding authority figures. One of the most prevalent themes that popped up in the narratives of the Chinese youngsters was that of parental expectations (in this case the father) regarding children's education. Their stories revealed an internalization of parents' standards and show that discrepant views about the future between parents and youngsters were considered problematic.

Sophie: Uhm, I see – I think – a father and a son. The son looks a little…thoughtful. The father thinks… looks like he…I think the son has to make a choice regarding his work or his studies or something. He needs to choose between two academic subjects, but he likes both. It looks as if the father is telling him: "pick the good one, pick the good one!" [Laughs]. So yes, eventually the son has chosen a subject; not the one that is fun, but the one through which he can achieve most. That's what I think, yes.

Lamchoi: I suppose this is a father and a son? It looks like the son has done something wrong. Maybe he stopped his studies to marry some girls or so. That is why he is looking so…weird. And so…unhappy. And the father looks at the son. He seems very disappointed. He thinks: "Oh son, you still have to learn so much. Why do you want to throw away your chances to a good life?"

Kristina Wu: He is the father and he is the son…They are fighting over something. The young man is watching television. They are fighting over the young man's job. Actually the young man is unemployed. But he doesn't want to look for a job, because he's afraid he won't find one. In the end the young man decides to go to university and then finally he finds a job. End of conflict and end of story.

Numerous authors have pointed to the impact of social class and socio-economic background on future aspirations, by which most speak of a positive correlation between advanced career goals and socio-economic status of the nuclear family (Kirk et al., 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Qian & Blair, 1999). With specific reference to the Chinese parents in this research, it was found – predictably – that all higher educated parents had advanced aspirations for the educational and professional careers of their children. Nevertheless, even though the image with the low(er) educated parents was somewhat more diverse, within this group high-level goals also appeared to be normative, reflecting an almost equally ambitious and optimistic stance (cf. Portes & Rumbaut, 2006[92]). These findings are analogous to those from earlier studies on first and second-generation students and parents in Western immigration countries, and particularly with immigrants from East-Asian backgrounds (Kipnis, 2011; Ledent et al., 2013; Nanhoe, 2012; Verhoeven et al., 2003). The pupils in this research seemed to have epitomized this aspired acquirement of a quality education. As such, other elements, aside from parental socio-economic status, must have played a role in the process of goal setting. During the inquiry various distinct elements were found to have infused the generally high ambitions for the future.

4.1. "A gold mansion and beauty await you inside your books"

Although parents occasionally made reference to intrinsic goals of education and educational success, such as "knowing" or the more morally-oriented objectives of "being able to distinguish right from wrong" and "becoming a good person", it appeared that throughout parents' discursive argumentation it was mainly extrinsic goals which were being stressed. This corresponds to the findings of Lei and Zhang (2011) who argued that the Confucian tradition of collectivism, by which collective interests are valued over those of individuals, has favoured a pragmatic orientation to education. "Education", they state, "is seen as a means to achieving socially valued practical goals (…), for example, to pass competitive exams, to gain social recognition, to secure a job of civic service, or to pursue a higher social status" (Lei & Zhang 2011, p. 135). In the following parts I will take a closer

[92] In their comprehensive study of immigrant families in the United States, Portes and Rumbaut (2001, 2006) note that most immigrant parents - no matter their nationality – are in fact very optimistic about their child's educational future, despite the trouble and affliction they were often put through. According to the authors these positive outlooks can be explained by the general immigrant drive to succeed, a finding they also see reflected in the fact that third and subsequent generation immigrant youngsters perform less well in school in the United States than those of the first generation.

look at Chinese pupils' and parents' argumentation and justification for their elevated academic aspirations, as well as expectations.

4.2. Cultural heritage: the interplay of *xiao* and *mianzi*

In abundant international literature Asian immigrant parents are found to value education very strongly and to have high expectations (Chao, 1996). Many of these studies have emphasized the role Chinese cultural heritage, particularly the extensive area of Confucian philosophy, as the source of Chinese parents' beliefs and academic expectations (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Li, 2001a; Xiong, 2007). Various researchers as well as data from the fieldwork have shown that the value of education is embodied in many Chinese sayings as the one given here, a famous Chinese proverb: "*Wan ban jie xia pin, wei you duo shu gao"* or "all jobs are low in status, except for study, which is the highest". This means, in practice, the more knowledge you have, the higher your social status in society. Consistent with these findings several parents and key figures in this study attributed causal primacy to their ethnic culture by presenting their emphasis on educational success as a reflection of one of the hallmarks of Chinese civilization in which they took much pride. They referred to the age-old Chinese cultural frame of reference that encourages and strives for academic success and within which not only the successful learner, but even more so the transmitters of knowledge are well respected. In the first and second of the following quotes, Kristina Wu's and Chen Gao's parents make reference to the traditional Chinese meritocratic ideal and the state examinations as symbols of social mobility.

> Father of Kristina Wu: Chinese culture is very different from Western culture. In Chinese culture children need to study well at all times. Here, it is different. People think: When my son is 18, he leaves the house and starts working, as a carpenter, or something else.
>
> Anthropologist: In your opinion: is education more important for Chinese than for Western people?
>
> Father: Yes, for Chinese education is a must, a must! The education system in China is almost 2000 years old. In the past, when you wanted to work for the government, you had to pass an exam. Here such exams don't exist. In China, still when you want to work for the government you need to pass exams. Working for the government, that is a good job eh with a good wage.
>
> Anthropologist: And has it something to do with Confucian values?
>
> Father: I don't know. All I know is that Chinese students study well, also the Chinese in Europe. My brother in law has two children; they live in Holland; and the children study very well. The son has just

finished his PhD and the girl is studying at university. That's why I tell Kristina she needs to go to Leuven. Leuven is the best university, I heard.

Mother of Chen Gao: We Chinese have a very old tradition of giving much value to education. That goes back a very long time.
Father Chan Gao: Yes, and now it is even worse than before. Since the 1990s education has become even a greater boundary-maker, as it makes even more a difference if you have a diploma of higher education or not, salary-wise but also regarding social class and standing.

In a third quote, one of the Chinese Protestant Ministers reflects that he only started to gain respect from his Chinese immigrant compatriots after he had become involved in education by establishing a Chinese school and by adding the role of teacher to his Minister position.

Church minister: So, in the past I used to visit all the Chinese restaurants in order to get in contact with them, to preach the gospel to them and to invite them to the Church. But in the beginning they didn't accept us. It was only when we started the Chinese school that they started to appreciate us and to respect us. In Chinese mentality there is a lot of respect for teachers, you know. Of course! That is our culture! Do you know Confucius? Confucius was a great teacher and everyone respects him. So, in Chinese mentality there is a lot of respect for education and for people with knowledge: professors, teachers and so on. These are really highly respected in Chinese society, much more than in Western countries. So, by organizing Chinese classes and a Chinese school, the Chinese families respected us very much. They had confidence in us. So, that is how we were able to start our church.

For a long time education has played a central role in Chinese culture. In addition, previously in this chapter I have shown that within a Confucian upbringing and according to the principle of *xiao* children are expected to take responsibility for the honour and reputation of their family by demonstrating professional and/or educational success. According to the studies of Vogels et al. (1999) and Pels et al. (2009) of the Chinese community in the Netherlands, this key value of respect for parents and conformity did not totally disappear with the second generation. Likewise in this research, the above-mentioned sense of family obligation was still clearly present with the Chinese students, irrespective of their gender or education form. Although it seemed somewhat less strong among the second generation due to a greater emphasis on autonomy and self-realisation, the value of *xiao* was still there, as demonstrated clearly here by Sophie.

> Sophie: I want to get enrolled in higher education and I must as well. [Laughs] You know, once I was joking around with my father, but actually he could not laugh with it. We were talking about studies and going to higher education and stuff like that. I asked him as a joke: "What if I don't want to go to get into higher education?" Suddenly his entire facial expression changed and he became deadly serious. He replied: "Those who do not enter higher education, those are not my daughters!" Man, I was suddenly petrified. Then, he saw that and he said: "No, you know, I just really want all my daughters to get a diploma of higher education, I really aspire that. So, make sure you make my dream come true." I said: "Yes, dad, I know I have to get a diploma and all, because you're nobody without it".

In her quote, Sophie not only refers to the notion of filial piety (*xiao*) but also – albeit implicitly – to the importance of 'face', a concept known in Chinese as *mianzi*. According to Liu-Huang, the central role of *mianzi* in Chinese societies should not be ignored as it "penetrates and internalizes the daily practices of social relationships" (2008, p. 72). Referring to the research by Chang & Holt (1994) she denotes the moral implication of face as "the reflections on one's reputation achieved by and maintained through the scrutiny of others" (Liu-Huang 2008, p. 72-73) and states it to be a flexible and dynamic concept. Both the concepts of *xiao* and *mianzi* are loosely related. In traditional Chinese culture, or as many have argued, even more so today, children who fail to achieve academic success run the risk of bringing shame to their parents and their ancestors (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Liu, 2008). This can help to explain why parents repeatedly uttered that their personal success was dependent upon the success of their children in the future. It also sheds light on the question why in many Chinese families the monitoring and evaluation of children's academic achievement surpassed the nuclear family. As such, when pupils talk about social comparison, pride and shame within the broader family, they demonstrate that relatives beyond the nuclear family constitute the first group of reference, or the first 'other' that scrutinizes.

> Terry: In our family, not really with my parents, but in my broader family, everything revolves around or depends on school grades and academic careers. I'll give you an example. Previously, my eldest cousin was being really spoiled by my grandmother, because he was the eldest grandchild and also the eldest grandson in the family and blablabla. However, after he failed at school – because he was really not into studying for a few years – it was a big drama in his house. And in the eyes of my family, especially my grandmother, he really failed. Now, nobody listens to him anymore, I means the adults don't listen to him anymore. The moment he says something, he is being judged. So, that is what happens when you get bad marks. When your grades are bad, then you lose your position in the family. There's a lot of pressure from the family and at times heavy discussions take place. So, a few months ago, when my grades were deteriorating, my parents said to me: "Remember what happened to your cousin!"

Pupil [4th year of secondary education, Antwerp]: It's just that my entire family has studied, so I have to be like that as well. My mom said everybody in the family is smart, so I have to show them that I am smart too.

According to various teachers from the Flemish focal schools, their Chinese pupils were indeed characterised by a strong sense of duty and obedience towards their parents. Their observation that most Chinese youngsters did not publicly oppose their parents, for instance at parent-teacher meetings, led them to view and represent the Chinese young as puppets on a parental string that passively accepted and embodied all parental wishes.

Teacher 4: Yes, they aspire much for their children.
Teacher 3: Yes, too much. In the past I have had pupils from the second year – so they're only 13 or 14 years old – whose parents came up to me and asked me: "Will she be able to study medicine?" Then I really have to say: "I'm sorry, madam, but it's too early to tell". Chinese parents in general look very far ahead and they aim high. Some children, I'm sure, are not able to reach those expectations.

Teacher 1: You know, what really strikes me is the fact that children absolutely do not revolt against their parents. They always speak of respect for their parents. That's their word: 'respect'. Very striking.
Anthropologist: In what kind of situations do you observe that? Can you give an example?
Teacher 1: Yes, for examples with the decisions of parents. Parents decide something, for example the study choice or the future profession of the child, and children will never oppose to that decision, never.
Teacher 2: The child doesn't react.
Teacher 1: No, the child never reacts.
Teacher 2: They sit next to their mother and father and they don't move. It is the parents who make the call and the child has virtually no say in it. That is actually also quite striking.

Some pupils clearly agreed with their teachers on the seemingly impossible level of parents' aspirations. During interviews they would hint that when their parents were dreaming of them becoming a lawyer or a doctor, they were just aiming too high. However, children would not disagree with their parents in public, as this would cause their parents a loss of face (*mianzi*). Similarly Vogels et al. (1999) argued that obedience and respect for parents and the elderly are instilled from childhood and that parents will not accept their children contradicting them in public. Nevertheless, whereas teachers commonly held the perspective of Chinese parents tracing-out a long-term path for their children with little room for negotiation on the part of the child, the youngsters themselves were less inclined to problematize those elevated parental aspirations. More than their teachers, they appeared to

distinguish between parental aspirations on the one hand and expectations on the other hand. In general, despite parents' orientation towards high-status professions and their apparent drive to fulfil those aspirations, their concrete expectations appeared much more subject to change and were never as inflexible as Flemish mainstream teachers tended to believe. In part these alterations were due to a forced subjection to reality, caused by labour market demands (cf. Li, 2001a) or by their children's inability to live up to such high educational objectives. Secondly, over time, many parents got to understand the educational system better and became aware of the higher range of possibilities available to their children (cf. Nanhoe, 2012). Thirdly, throughout my fieldwork I found a great deal of evidence revealing negotiations between parents and children in the selection of a specific course of study or professional career. This shows that despite the emphasis Chinese families placed on respect and compliance, children were also granted a considerable degree of autonomy with regard to the overall design of their future pathway. In the end, the choice of a particular direction was mainly dictated by the concrete expectations of the pupils.

4.3. Transnationalism and the Chinese eduscape

Many Chinese respondents considered education to be of great value. Putting emphasis on academic success was seen as the result of their belonging to an age-old cultural frame of reference. As such, the success constituted a significant symbolic marker of their ethnic identity, of their *Chineseness,* which they contrasted to Western identity, education styles and aspirations. On more than one occasion respondents placed their own aspirations against those of their non-Chinese peers, whom they considered lacking in ambition. In contrast to Fordham & Ogbu (1986), who found that black students in certain American schools associated academic success with acting 'white', various Chinese pupils and parents in this study asserted that being a good student was tantamount to being Chinese.

During one of my conversations with Wu Guo, he said:

> I can study whatever I want, but my conscious tells me that I should aim as high as possible. I want to become an engineer, do something with mathematics and I want to go as far in those studies as I can. Many of my friends, well a few, they don't want to study as much or at least they don't want to put as much effort to it. Belgians are often really superficial in those things. However, the way I see it: it's

better to study one hour extra per day when you're young, than having to work a couple of years extra when you're old.

The sisters Sophie and Julie commented on the differences they observed between Belgium-born Chinese youth and more recent Chinese immigrants.

Sophie: I think most Chinese students here are kind of westernized.
Julie: Yes. You can clearly notice differences with Chinese youngsters who have only been four or five years in Belgium. They might not be so good in languages but they are very good in mathematics and stuff. They are also able to study very well, because they learn fast and because they know that it is important.

Similar ideas popped up during conversations with Chinese teachers at the Chinese community school and during one of my interviews with a Chinese church minister.

Teacher X: Important Chinese values are: studying hard and working hard.
Teacher Y: Yes, that's true.
Teacher X: With us, within Chinese families, parents always force their children to study harder, harder than the children here in Belgium, as far as I can see.
[Group discussion with Chinese teacher at Chinese community school]

Anthropologist: As far as I can see now, most Chinese students, second generation, they are doing quite well in school.
Chinese church minister: Yes, in comparison to many other youngsters. That is because of the Chinese mentality! I mean, the Chinese way, as I told you before, Chinese people are highly respectful towards scholars. Ok? Education plays as a very important role in Chinese culture.

The identity-making process or the development of a sense of Chineseness is, however, not only the result of installing a boundary with other ethnic groups at the local level, but should instead also be examined in light of transnational processes and the power of imagination. Both phenomena are entailed in Appadurai's concept of "ethnoscape" (Appadurai, 1996). According to Appadurai, in order to understand recent migrations and the movement of people, ideas, objects, capital and processes of identity making, we need to realise that people are deterritorialised and subject to what he calls 'the social imaginary'. It is this power of the social imaginary in the construction of agency and identity in the globalized world, I argue, that has brought some pupils to (temporarily) display aspirations that not only exceeded those of their counterparts but even those of their parents. During some months,

Lucas Lee (ASO) and Terry (TSO) both held the future ambition of studying economics (or science) and public relations respectively at a renowned British (Cambridge) or American university. Notably both Lucas and Terry put forward their ambitious ideas in a period during which they expressed much dissatisfaction with their study track and/or school. Terry for example, after having changed schools and transferring from the general to the technical track, was faced with new peers whom in her opinion showed little interest in academic success. She felt that she didn't belong in her class group; that she was an outsider, and she wished to distance herself from her peers.

> Terry: The people in my class behave very badly all the time. I don't know why. I guess because most of them don't really choose to study public relations; they just failed in their other tracks and ended up in PR. For sure, they are absolutely not motivated. So, I don't want to be associated with them. You know, all the teachers look down on our class; they consider our class "terrible". I'm really the odd man out, always sitting on the first row, I'm quiet, I pay attention, I take notes, I ask questions. To my classmates, active involvement just doesn't exist. So, they think I'm weird. Also, during some projects we had to write down a word on paper and then make a story around it or picture the word. While other students wrote down "love" or "chocolate" or something, I kept writing down the word "discipline". My teacher even took me apart to ask me why I always wrote down that word. As if that wasn't obvious. I think there is discipline needed in school. I respect teachers. They think I'm dull. I let them think so.

> Terry: I study Chinese and I want to study Spanish as well in evening school. My mom first said 'no' because she thought I needed to have some energy left. But I told her: "Mom, if I come on the labour market with a diploma of PR, they will just laugh at me! I also want to have a diploma of Chinese and Spanish. Otherwise there's no way I can compete. I might also go to Cambridge. I talked to my parents about that. Many people at my school start to work after they finish secondary education. I don't want to do that. Since I already have my schoolbag on my back, I can better carry it until the end, until I have everything I aim for. Only then I will put down my schoolbag.

It seems that out of fear to lose 'market value' resulting from being identified with a lower study track and with the negative attitudes and behavioural patterns of her peers, Terry had to seek new ways to recover her credibility and to reconfirm her identity as a Chinese learner. One perceived way of adding value was by studying Spanish and Chinese in afterschool hours; a second was by aspiring towards reputable studies abroad. In that same period, Lucas saw himself confronted with decreasing school marks. At the same time he expressed much dissatisfaction with his teachers, because in his opinion they did not put sufficient effort in their teaching and were therefore unable to provide him with a true quality

education. He feared encountering the same experience at Flemish universities. Therefore, he stated, he was thinking of continuing his studies in the United Kingdom or the United States.

> Lucas Lee: I think that when I go to university I prefer to go to England or to the United States. My parents say that Antwerp also has good universities, but I don't agree. Schools are much better in the United States and England than here. Many of the intelligent and historical people come from those countries.

I argue that partly from their dissatisfaction with their school environment, yet mostly out of fear of losing face due to their perceived educational failure, both Terry and Lucas were inclined to subscribe to the transnational identity of the successful Chinese immigrant student, or in other words, to the model minority paradigm. As such they started imaging the aspiration and praxis of multiple Chinese students around the globe whose educational accomplishments at Western top universities were and to this point still are transnationally spread and praised across (Chinese) mass media. By expressing elevated educational aspirations and by creating 'imagined biographies' (Appadurai, 1996) for the future, Lucas and Terry sought to reposition themselves and to reconfirm their belonging to the Chinese ethnoscape centred on education (cf. Appadurai, 1996), or as I would like to call it, the Chinese *eduscape.* The eduscape, as a transnational and deterritorialised Chinese phenomenon rooted in traditional Chinese cultural heritage, constitutes the realm in which educational success as a cultural symbolic marker is being revitalized and in which imagined lives are negotiated, thereby blurring the boundaries between the global and the local. In his study of the cultural dimension of globalization, Appadurai also stressed the importance of "contacts with, news of, and rumours about others in one's social neighbourhood who have become inhabitants of these faraway worlds" (1996, p. 53). With respect to those elements, the narratives of the respondents in this study revealed that more distant family members and other diasporic Chinese often acted as significant groups of reference about whom stories were told at the kitchen table and in relation to whom the own identity was negotiated and re-constructed. As such, not only by mass-mediated narratives but also through regular talks within the family, Chinese pupils in this study were exposed to the imagery of renowned international studies abroad, which although not leading to real enactment[93], temporarily helped them to reconfirm their Chinese identity and to avoid losing face.

[93] In February 2015, Lucas was found to study Physics (1st Bachelor) at the Catholic University of Leuven. Terry was studying Applied Linguistics (1st Bachelor) at the University of Antwerp.

Father of Lucas Lee: Many Chinese send their children to England, because they think England has very good secondary schools; or to Italy; or to the United States. Many, many young children are sent away. I don't consider it a good thing, but it has always been like that. Before parents sent of their children to the big cities to study in the best schools, so they can go the best universities. In Belgium all the schools are very similar to each other. In China: a good school is really good; a bad school is terribly bad. So, if you want to go to a good university you have to go to a good school. I went to a good school, but I had to work very, very hard. I was one of the best students, so I could go to university. In the past it was not easy to go to university, you know. Only the best students in town could go. Of my city, that was comparable to Antwerp, only 20 students could go. And those who could go were sure to get a good job afterwards and to lead a good life.

Father of Amber and Mei-Lan: In my wife's family, there's a couple with 2 children who went to California to study. Yes, I told Amber and Mei-Lan about it. Per year they pay 30.000 Euro, and they have to study 4, 5 or 6 years. So, the family had to sell the apartment in order to pay for their children's education. In Canada you have similar situations. And my sister wanted to go to England, but England is even more expensive, 40.000 a year. … London is famous eh. England has a lot of famous universities.

4.4. Aspiring upward social mobility

Anthropologist: And your parents, do they consider it important that you get good grades at school?
X: Way too much!
Z: Hell yes!
Y: Yes, very important!
X: My parents want me to find a good job.
[Group discussion with Chinese students of 1st year of secondary education]

Most clearly and predictably the respondents' ambitions also reflected their parents' adherence to the ideology of social mobility through education, which aligns with the meritocratic ideal and optimistic belief in the utility of schooling in traditional Chinese culture. Education is believed to be the main road to fame, material success and a good living. The optimistic belief in upward social mobility is not unique to the Chinese, given the plethora of similar findings from studies on other ethnic minorities. In her PhD research on Moroccan students at Universities of Higher Professional Education (HBO) in the Netherlands, Machteld de Jong showed that Moroccan parents, despite their low education level, believed in the importance of a good education for their children, as this was seen as a form of security for the future (de Jong, 2012). The quotations she used show that the

Moroccan parents wanted their children to grab the opportunities that they themselves could not or would not tackle (see also Hermans, 1995). Various authors spoke of 'folk theories of getting ahead/success' (Ogbu, 1990; Sue & Okazaki, 2009), while yet other authors have pointed to 'ideologies of opportunity' (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2003) and the 'immigrant mentality'. By these terms they both made a distinction between first-, second- and subsequent generation migrants and assumed a particularly strong motivation within the first generation to succeed in the new society (Ledent et al., 2013; Ogbu, 1990; Qian & Blair, 1999). With respect to the latter Qian & Blair (1999) similarly argued that foreign-born Asian Americans exhibit a stronger motivation to move upward in the host society than their native-born counterparts. Some believe that as a result of the 'immigrant mentality', the socioeconomic position of the immigrant family plays a less divisive role with the first and second generations. The second generation is the one that is believed to maximize the opportunities afforded in the new land (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, & Sullivan, 2009)

> Julie: My parents value education very much. They themselves did not study much, so to a certain extent they are obliged to work in the catering sector. Here in Belgium, they cannot really integrate into society because they don't speak Dutch. So, if we study we can achieve much more, have more options and choose the things that we really want to do. Then we can achieve more than just a restaurant or so.
> Anthropologist: And when your father dreams about his daughters' future: what does he aspire?
> Julie: In any case that we will be much better off than them, mostly because we will have studied more. He does not expect us to become super rich or something, but still that we can live under good conditions in a good environment. And with a good family too. In fact, I must say he does want us to have quite a thriving life…not that we have to become millionaires or something, but still…[laughs]…actually, yeah, quite something like that.

> Anthropologist: What would your parents want you to do when you grow up? Do you know that?
> Rose: To start with, absolutely nothing in the catering business. They would not allow me.
> Anthropologist: Why not?
> Rose: My parents don't want me to. I don't know the real reason for it.

As demonstrated earlier, several Chinese parents in this research received only limited education, mainly as the result of structural constraints in the home country. Moreover, for a significant group of parents their occupational position in menial labour had not been a straightforward career choice, instead it was a means to provide for their families and to enhance the socio-economic position of the immediate family in the long run. Hence, not surprisingly, while expressing their dreams for their child's future, parents stated they wished

their children to be different from themselves. By discursively distinguishing between white- and blue-collar professions, with the latter were generally regarded as inferior, parents wanted to avoid their offspring becoming confined to the Chinese catering or retail sector. This also includes the low(er) educated parents. Rijkschroeff (1998) and Ji & Koblinksky (2009) had similar findings for the Chinese community in the Netherlands and the United States. They found that Chinese parents wished for their children to obtain better job opportunities and were willing to allocate considerable financial resources to their children's education; an observation that was also given by the Flemish teachers and youngsters in this research. According to the latter their parents regularly depicted the restaurant life as "hard", "difficult" and "tiring".

> Anthropologist: Would your parents accept the idea of you working in the restaurant?
> Z: No.
> X: No.
> Anthropologist: And how do you know that they would not accept that?
> X: If I don't study well, I will have to work in the restaurant and my parents told me that they don't want that. My parents say: "Better not, because it's quite difficult. It's hard."
> Z: My parents want me to do something else. No restaurant for me.
> W: Yeah, according to mine: for me neither.
> Y: Yes, it's a tiring job, they say.
> [Group discussion with Chinese first graders, Antwerp, 2010]

> Anthropologist: Would you like Meiying to take over the restaurant later on?
> Meiying's mother: No, that's not our intention. Actually, I really don't want that. When everything goes well, we will hire employees to work in the restaurant.

> Teacher 1: And when parents have a restaurant… They work very hard eh, those people. […] They are very ambitious. And I think they also want things to be easier for their children. Yes, they show much ambition. They are… Chinese are just very ambitious

Building on the instrumental 'upward-mobility frame of reference' (Ogbu, 1990), Chinese parents highly stressed the importance of higher education credentials in order for their children to reach better employment positions. Only with two ASO-pupils, the sisters Yulian and Sam, did parents not state a quality university education as their top priority. Seemingly on the contrary, they were urging their daughters to become the rightful owners and managers of the family's retail store, a grand store that had been established by the paternal grandparents and of which the family appeared quite proud. For these parents the

take-over option was a valuable future prospect for their children. Although the girls felt they still had a choice with regard to their professional future – getting involved in higher education or working in their inherited business – it was clear that their parents wished to install a secure professional haven for their daughters and a solid starting block for social mobility.

> Mother: Sam is 16 now, almost 18 now eh. If she doesn't go to university, then she can help in the store. That's better eh.
> Anthropologist: And what would you prefer, that she goes off to university or that she starts working in the business?
> Mother: When she can go to university or to University College, then ok, she can go. Otherwise she starts working. And Yulian too, I think she will stop when she's 18, I think both of them. [Laughs]. Look, we have a business and when my husband and I get old, then everything is for our children. If they want to go to university, it's fine, but if not, then they work. I think working is better.
> Anthropologist: Why?
> Mother: I think that when they go to university, they will only stay for 1 month. The business is big. We bought the part of my brother in law especially for them, you know. That's good! They're only 18 and they have such a big shop already. And she [Sam] says: "I don't want to". Why not? Such a big shop!

> Sam: It is my dad in particular who wants us to take over the store. My mother on the other hand always tells us: "It's not a must. You are not obliged to. It will be your choice". However, in the same breath she says: "It's better to be a store's manager than a regular employee working for a Belgian boss, as the latter would entail accepting a lot of complaints and comments on your acts". And so, yes, my mom says: "This is really hard and I don't want you to go through all of that". That is why she also prefers that we eventually take over the store.

Likewise, the parents of Terry and Sheng-Du were open to the idea of their child becoming rooted in the family restaurant. However, it was clear that for these parents taking over the family business became an accepted option only after the child's rough school career experiences had compelled them to re-adjust their initial expectations. In other words, with these families the entrepreneurial option was not purely a positive choice, but rather the result of altering parental expectations as a reaction to the real educational attainment of their child.

In summation it may be stated that like the vast majority of parents in this world, the Chinese parents in this research wish for a better life for their children than that of their own. With specific reference to the Chinese restaurant workers and blue-collar parents, this entailed not wanting their child to follow them in their professional footsteps. If the child would not be

successful in education, then the family business was considered a safety net. Only exceptionally the latter was considered as a first class choice, though even for those family the overall aspiration of higher education in the Chinese diaspora appeared to have prevailed, as also their children are currently studying at university.

4.5. Immigrant status

4.5.1. Subscription to the model minority narrative

Apart from traditional cultural values and the prevailing meritocratic ideology of social mobility, a third element was discovered to have reinforced or intensified the value of education – in particular higher education - with Chinese immigrant families: their immigrant status. Various authors have shown that the perception of the relationship between the minority and majority group and minority's social status plays a significant role in the way minority groups position themselves in society and engage in aspirations and strategies for the future of their children (Hermans, 1995; Li, 2001a; Ogbu, 1990; Pels et al., 2009). In order to uncover the true roots of expectations, an additional analysis is thus needed of the ways in which Chinese pupils and parents perceive, feel and experience structural mechanisms of in- or exclusion from the host society.

To a large extent the Chinese respondents in this research shared characteristics with Ogbu's (1990) category of the 'immigrant minority' as classified and described in his explanatory study of the educational position of minority youth in the United States. First of all it could be observed that as a broader ethnic community, the Chinese not only saw but also experienced real-life opportunities to put education to meaningful use. In addition, all respondents agreed on the fact that they were generally being regarded as 'different' or 'other', predominantly on the basis of physical appearance or sometimes grounded in 'primary cultural and/or linguistic differences' (cf. Ogbu, 1990). For many respondents their physical attributes in particular were denoted as an undeniable reality or what Ang (2001) called "the inescapability of Chineseness" (in Ngan & Kwok-bun, 2012, p. 36). Of course, as I have demonstrated earlier, the dialectical process of othering is a game in which two sides must inevitably play a role, and that is exteriorized by a discourse acted out by both parties (Ngan & Kwok-bun, 2012). Nevertheless, no matter how 'Belgian' or 'Westernized'

respondents may have felt, their physicality always stayed with them as a continuous reminder of their difference.

> Father of Chen Gao: You know, with our face, our physical appearance; the Belgians will never see us as Belgian, even though we already have the Belgian nationality for 15 years now. The first impression people have of us is always: "Aha, Asian!" and then maybe "Chinese" or "Japanese", but still "foreigner".
> Mother: Yes, we think we're Belgian, but…
> Father: Yes, we feel Belgian, but all the others consider us Chinese because of our face. But, we are not Chinese anymore. Our mentality has changed, you know. Actually, we are not Chinese, we are not totally Belgian, and we are none of the two or a bit of both. I don't know.
> Mother: But that is our choice eh.
> Father: Yes, of course it's our choice, but we can't change it.

> Chen Gao: Following summer camps with youngsters that are only Belgian is not always easy. It's not that they exclude me, but they always ask weird questions about China. "Is this true?" "How is that in China?" Usually after a while it gets better, but it never really disappears. For example, with my classmates… I'm actually a kind person; I help a lot of people. Recently, one of them said: "He's not the good Samaritan, but the good Chinese". You see? [Laughs]

At first sight, however, despite the ubiquity of the othering-mechanism - endorsed by my presence with them as an anthropologist - respondents' narratives showed very little evidence or preconceived ideas of having to face structural barriers caused by prejudice or racism on behalf of the dominant society. Neither parents nor children initially ever mentioned lived confrontations with discrimination on the basis of their race or ethnicity. Interesting in this respect have been respondents' reactions to the following billboard.

The above billboard formed part of a large-scale campaign launched in March 2010 by the Flemish nationalist and right-wing conservative political party 'Vlaams Belang'. In its 'defence of the rights of the Flemings', the political party had scattered three posters across major cities throughout Flanders. Each poster contained the words "Vlaams Belang" and the word "why" in either French, Arabic or Chinese, by which the party wished to denounce three major issues they considered problematic for Flanders. The French *pourquoi* referred to the Belgian communitarian tensions; the Arabic lettering to the allegedly growing Islamization and the danger it might pose for the preservation of Flemish identity. The third 'teaser', the one with the Chinese flag and characters, had to symbolize the loss of jobs to low-wage countries. In the period after the spread of the posters I decided to verify with my respondents

if they had noticed the posters in the streets and what they thought was its main message. Surprisingly, only a few respondents had taken notice of the billboards. Moreover, after they were shown a picture, nobody interpreted the message as an act of racism vis-à-vis the Chinese, instead some even saw it as positive, as shown below.

> Lamchoi: Yes, I saw the poster when I was cycling together with my dad. I thought it was really strange when I saw those posters; one saying 'Vlaams Belang' and the other 'why' in Chinese
> Anthropologist: Do you know what 'Vlaams Belang' is or what it means?
> Lamchoi: Uhm, is that some kind of union, or… I don't know [Laughs]. Oh yes, I think it's a kind of committee, isn't it? So the Chinese work together with Vlaams Belang?
> Anthropologist: And what did your dad say when he saw the posters?
> Lamchoi: Nothing. I asked him what the Chinese characters meant and he answered "why". That's it. Nothing more. He didn't say anything about Vlaams Belang.

> Father of Amber: Is this some kind of cooperation? Did they do something together with the Chinese? They are not against the Chinese eh? They are more against the Moroccan, not the Chinese.

> Anthropologist: Do you know what the meaning of the poster is?
> Chen Gao: Uhm, some kind of cooperation between Flanders and China? China now has a growing economy and there are many Chinese companies that invest in Flanders. It's all over the newspapers. So, maybe these companies have a positive influence on the Belgian economy? Is that it?

Although the nationalist campaign did not target the Chinese community in Flanders, the previous quotes are illustrative of the widespread belief among respondents of a positive image of the Chinese in Belgium. Pang (2003) has shown that as a community the Chinese generally do not fit within the notion of the 'migrant' that usually refers to a person of relatively low social status with high chances of falling below the poverty line. Therefore, Chinese migrants are not perceived as a 'threat' to Belgian society. According to Geense & Pels (1998) the same is true for the Chinese community in the Netherlands. They argue that although in the Western perception of Chinese migrants, for centuries both positive and negative stereotypes alternately prevailed, with the latter often leading to severe forms of exclusion and discrimination (e.g. in Canada, the US), currently the Chinese are mostly associated with positive attributes. Although the respondents in the study of Geense and Pels (1998) openly talked about different forms of exclusion and discrimination which they and their children had to face, the Chinese parents and pupils in this study were only able or willing to give very few examples of being discriminated against, either by school staff or by the broader Flemish community. In most cases they attributed these occurances to single

ignorant individuals and did not view it as institutionalized forms of prejudice or discrimination, except in relation to the labour market as will be discussed in section 4.5.2. Remarks from peers, for instance about their typical Chinese physical features or language, were mainly interpreted by the pupils as the result of 'joking around'. In fact, also parents were mostly neutral to even overtly positive about the way they were being treated by the Belgian community in general and by school staff in particular. However, it is very important to bear in mind that Chinese, especially of the first generation, often retain from overtly expressing negative feelings. Instead, they prefer to remain silent, even in cases of overt ethnic conflict or racism. Stories about discrimination against Chinese usually referred to 'other Chinese in Flanders or elsewhere in Europe who had been victims', not to themselves.

Notably, when talking about discrimination and stigma, various respondents immediately began discussing other minority groups, by which they contrasted the image of Chinese people to that of other immigrant groups, in particular those of Moroccan or Turkish background. In their discursive reflections about the possible underpinnings of such a distinction, however, many parents clearly subscribed to the 'model minority narrative', much in the same way as Yumi Ng did in her opinion piece in the Flemish newspapter (cf. chapter 2).

> Mother of Sophie and Julie: It's because Chinese work hard and don't ask for financial support. Also in the street people have a different impression of us than of other migrants; less wild, less noisy.
>
> Mother of Lei: Children from other immigrant groups are sometimes brought up in a very bad way. They really do bad things. In our family the education of the children is really important. It's important to us that our children behave well. Also, we work hard and we don't cause trouble. We do what we have to do. We pay when we have to pay and we treat our customers well. To live a good life, you need to work hard and don't ask financial support from the government.
>
> Mother of Meiying: The Chinese are not bad. Most of the times they are very polite. Some are conservative and don't really search contact with others besides Chinese. Though most Belgians I know don't have any problems with Chinese, much more so with Moroccans and Turks because they cause more trouble than we do. I have noticed that some Moroccans also work hard and behave well. I don't want to generalize. People always look at entire communities, but every community has good and bad people.
>
> Father of Kristina Wu: Many Belgians say that the Chinese are the best foreigners. [Laughs] You never hear about Chinese doing something wrong, right? They are peaceful; they smile; they are friendly to

> customers; they work hard; and only a very limited number of Chinese receive social benefits. In Holland, it's the same; Dutch people also consider the Chinese the best immigrants. Belgians are not racists. When they are racists, it's not really a part of their character, but the result of so many other immigrants having done bad things. The Chinese generally adapt to their new country. In Chinese we say: *Ru xiang suisu* [Literal translation: "When you arrive in someone else's village, then follow the local customs" or "When in Rome do as the Romans do"]

Although Meying's mother exhibits a somewhat more nuanced discourse, many other parents clearly displayed a demarcation between themselves as 'good migrants willing to integrate' and 'others, particularly Islamic minorities, behaving financially and morally in unaccepted ways'. Important to note here is that, during the last few decades, the Chinese authorities have displayed a particular discourse of 'upgrading the migrant' (Nyíri & Saveliev, 2002). In their book 'Globalizing Chinese migration', Nyíri and Saveliev explain that a new category of Chinese migrants was created, thereby including all diasporic Chinese that have left the country since 1978, regardless of their status abroad, motivation and way of leaving. Using the channels of existing or newly established Chinese organizations as well as the medium of television, an important message is recycled and spread: regardless of socioeconomic background, all Chinese 'have the chance to prove themselves as good citizens by being successful abroad' and by doing so 'achieve glory for the motherland' (*wei jiaxiang zheng guang*) (Nyíri & Saveliev, 2002, p. 331-332). The limited scope of this study does not permit to make scientifically sound statements about how in reality these messages are spread, received, interpreted and applied by distinct Chinese organizations and families in Flanders. However, the last quote by Kristina Wu's father appears to be strongly related to the meritocratic ideal underpinning the central message promulgated by the Chinese government.

In addition, parents and pupils appeared to be continuously recognized in their subscription to the model minority narrative by school staff. Comments made by teachers and principals of the two focal schools clearly also endorsed the same positive narrative. The adjectives most commonly used by the staff to describe the Chinese pupils were: disciplined, polite, kind, dutiful, diligent, timid, and studious.

> Teacher: Usually, our Asian students are among the most diligent. They are quite good in sciences, but also in other subjects they are getting good grades. You know, it's because these students still work, they still study, in contrast to most of our other students, including the Belgians. Absolutely.

Principal: We've never had problems with our Chinese pupils. They are much more disciplined than for example the African youngsters. The Chinese are punctual and always hand in their assignments in time, while with the African youngsters…well, there you have the African rhythm. It is a very different group and for me, this has to do with cultural differences. Moreover, the Chinese parents really expect a lot from their children.

Teacher 1: Yulian and Sam, they are very sweet and kind children.
Teacher 2: All our Chinese pupils are, aren't they?
Teacher 1: Yes, true.
Teacher 2: I've never had an unpleasant Chinese in my class.
Teacher 1: [Laughs] Me neither!
Teacher 2: An unpleasant Moroccan, yes.
Teacher 1: Sht, sht, we shouldn't say that. [Laughs]
Teacher 2: But there is just a very big difference with the other groups, regarding politeness, education at home…

As is evident from the quotes of both parents and school staff, the model minority narrative inherently contains the message, "If the Chinese can succeed in Belgium, then why not blacks, Moroccan or Turks?" Complementing the success of one minority group implicitly – or explicitly – points to the failure of other groups, and tends to essentialize the cultural or racial dimension of the behaviour. Moreover, the hegemonic stance and ethnocentrism of the dominant group remain largely hidden (Clycq et al., 2014).

Based on the findings of many other scholars, Clycq and colleagues also point out that such hegemonic discourse is being internalized and even legitimized by particular minority groups. On many occasions Chinese respondents compared their own parental strategies to those of other ethnic minority groups, by which they generally attributed the disadvantaged educational position of Moroccan and Turkish youngsters in Flanders to inferior child raising practices and limited attachment to the value of education on the part of the minority parents. In doing so, they also underlined the belief that minorities themselves are entirely to blame for their disadvantaged socioeconomic position and lags in educational or professional attainment. To succeed or not to succeed then becomes only a matter of choice and control (McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Valencia, 2010). Not only can the model minority myth be a potential creator of interracial tension, it also ignores the structures of racism and stigmatisation of which even model minorities remain victim to a certain degree.

4.5.2. The ethnic glass ceiling

Recently Crul, Schneider and Lelie (2013) demonstrated that although the second generation - growing up and being educated in Europe - should not longer experience more obstacles on the labour market than their native counterparts, the reality unfortunately teaches us otherwise. They show that in all European countries many more second-generation youngsters work beneath their level of education than their native peers of the same age and educational background. Secondly, the authors found that most often it is the successful and highly educated second-generation youngsters that are confronted with racism on the labour market. Whereas employers on the lowly skilled end of the labour market cannot longer refuse immigrant employees because they fulfil the demand for workers, this is not true for jobs in the higher echelons of the labour market.

Although Chinese respondents generally make little reference to structural forms of discrimination and prejudice, as I have shown, perceived work-related impediments occasionally circulated openly or in more subdued ways throughout respondents' narratives when children's professional future was discusssed. Although the model minority myth makes people believe that there is little or no racial discrimination in Flanders directed against the Chinese, various Chinese parents (lower and higher educated) made reference to real or potential discriminatory practices on the job market, albeit often in a reluctant way. According to some this might be the result of the fact that Chinese immigrants tend to consider it improper to complain about or show 'the host' in a poor light (cf. Geense & Pels, 1998).

> Mother of Li-Na and Li-Zhi: My brother graduated from a Belgian university. He even has more than one diploma. So, to him it should not be a problem to find a good job, and he indeed did. However, regarding the highest positions, then no, then the employer will always look for a Belgian. As a Chinese with a diploma, getting a regular job is fine, but getting a top position, that's very hard, if ever possible.

> Anthropologist: Do you think it will be easy for Lucas Lee to find a job?
> Father of Lucas Lee: I don't think so. I don't know. Look, on paper he's Belgian, but his face shows that he's Chinese. Many employers don't want foreigners, especially for the good jobs.

> Father of Mei-Lan and Amber: Let's say that when you don't have a diploma and you work at the lower level, in a factory or something, there's not a problem. Usually they even like Chinese better, because they work harder. But at the higher level, I don't know.

Amber: I think there's discrimination on the labour market. I once read an article about how employers look at the names of job applicants on CV's. It said that when they see a foreign name, they don't hire the person.

Mother of Sophie and Julie: I push them to study hard, and I want them to have more diplomas, not just one. Because, you know, for you it is ok when you have one diploma, you can find a good job. But for us, we need more. When the boss can choose between a Belgian and a Chinese with one diploma, he will choose the Belgian person. That is what I think and what I hear from friends and family. So, we need to have more, very good grades and more diplomas.

Mother of Chen Gao: Racism is something that exists everywhere. It's not that we are confronted with it much, but for example in order to get a job….when there is only one good job, then we as foreigners have less chances to get the job. Whereas for you it's 100%, with us it's something like 90% chance. That 10% is very important and is also dictated by your diplomas, grades and competences. I think the face plays a role, yes. Our friends from the Chinese association sometimes reflect on it. They are all highly educated and have good jobs, but they can never become a director or a professor. Of course language might also be a problem in their case. So, I hope that for the second generation it will be easier, but I don't know eh. I always tell Chen Gao: "You ought to be the best; you have to improve and keep improving, then your ethnic background might not matter anymore!"
Ning: My mother has a Chinese friend. He had two Master diplomas from a Belgian University, but he could not find a job. Well, he could find a job but not at the level of his qualifications. At the higher level there's always discrimination. So, that is why he decided to leave Belgium. He now works for a Dutch company where he received a job at the correct level.

Various Chinese parents have justified their emphasis on prestigious diplomas and jobs, by conveying that, as a minority, they must overcompensate in order to attain equal status with whites. Although both parents and pupils were clearly optimistic about the future, to some extent they also expressed concern about racial preference in the local job market (cf. Li, 2001a) and the potential confrontation with a 'job ceiling' (Ogbu, 1990) or an 'ethnic glass ceiling' (Cheng, 2002). Previous studies of Chinese communities in distinct regions indeed pointed to a denial of equal access to desirable jobs and positions for Chinese immigrants, despite their capacities and credentials (Pookong & Skeldon, 1998; Cheng, 2002). They speak of negative stereotypes and structural barriers that prevent highly skilled diasporic Chinese from reaching key managerial positions. In addition to the ethnic glass ceiling in Flanders there is also the phenomenon that the Chinese are not perceived as *allochtonen* with specific needs. Unlike various other immigrant groups in the region, the Chinese have not been subjected to affirmative actions by the government. Students, but also in particular the parents in this study, were aware of this reality and hoped they could surpass

most barriers by achieving good academic credentials. Consistent with their cultural traditions and in accordance with the impetus ensuing from the global Chinese 'eduscape' they created, re-negotiated and stimulated a positive Chinese identity that promoted academic success and served protective roles against possible impediments (cf. Byrd & Chavous, 2009).

5. Propensity towards geographical mobility

To some degree, the ethnic glass ceiling, as mentioned in the previous section, has created a propensity in Flanders – albeit minor - within the Chinese community towards geographical mobility. In the fourth chapter I have pointed to the significant outflow of highly skilled professionals and students from China and Hong Kong and the fear with many Chinese officials of the severe risks that a continuing brain drain might pose to China's and Hong Kong's international competitiveness and future socio-economic development. I have also stated that both China and Hong Kong are pursuing a conscious policy to lure back those who have left. As a result of this national policy the father of Chen Gao, a classical musician working at the Symphonic Orchestra of the Flemish Opera, has been offered a job as a professor at the conservatory of Shanghai. He stated that China had outlined a deliberate policy of attracting highly educated and skilled overseas Chinese with alluring salaries and positions in a broad number of domains: technology, economy, science, and also culture. Although Chen Gao's father did not return, at least two of his close acquaintances had done so after they were offered jobs working as professors at Chinese universities. One of them was a musician colleague from Paris, the other one, coincidentally, the father of pupil respondent Lou. Although unfortunately I lack sufficient evidence to substantiate the hypothesis that their return has been the direct result of a confrontation with the ethnic glass ceiling, I think it is safe to presume that the more highly skilled Chinese immigrants are faced with ethnic roadblocks in their host country's labour market, the more the home country's professional offers and an eventual return can become a force of attraction, particularly for first generation immigrants.

In her study on education and family strategies of Chinese between Hong Kong and Canada, Waters (2006) points to the subjective nature of the value of Western credentials to Chinese abroad as it "varies spatially and in relation to place-based, transnational relations" (2006, p. 183). She speaks of "the geographically differentiated nature of cultural capital in

relation to specific social relationships" (2006, p. 183). In her study, Waters shows that many young people from Hong Kong study abroad because it provides them with cultural capital that distinguishes them from the masses and that the overseas credentials become only really of value when they return to Hong Kong. This embeddedness of cultural capital in particular social fields is important and was well articulated by Bourdieu:

> The value objectively and subjectively placed on the academic qualification is in fact defined only by the totality of the social uses that can be made of it. Thus the evaluation of diplomas by the closest peer groups, such as relatives, neighbours, fellow students (one's 'class' or 'year') and colleagues, can play an important role in masking the effects of devaluation. These phenomena of individual and collective misrecognition are in no way illusory, since they can orient real practices, especially the individual and collective strategies aimed at establishing or re-establishing the objective reality of the value of the qualification or position." (Bourdieu 1984, p. 143, cited in Waters, 2006, p. 183).

From a meritocratic perspective, academic credentials, as a form of cultural capital, are expected to convert into economic capital and social status. When this is not the case, overseas Chinese might decide to return to the home country where the value of their diploma(s) is much higher. Following the theories of Bourdieu and Waters, to a very large extent this will depend on a person's social field and the main reference group to which one relates. From the following quote it appears that to the father of Chen Gao the social field of reference was oscillating between China, the country where he was born, and Flanders, the country in which he had been residing for over twenty years.

> Father of Chen Gao: I had to disappoint them, because I have my life here. My old school mate, who lived in Paris, he recently returned to Shanghai's Conservatory. The Conservatory searched everywhere for good Chinese musicians, in Europe and in America. Previously, my friend worked for an orchestra, but now he's a big professor eh, a very prestigious position. So, it was attractive for him to go back.
> Anthropologist: Not in the same way for you?
> Father: I don't want to go back full time. To them it was either full time or nothing. I proposed to be there half of the year, but they didn't accept it. And I also like my job here, and my colleagues. My friend in Paris also didn't have to worry about his child, because his son had almost graduated from university. His wife has a boutique in Paris, for now she stays there. But they offered him good conditions: a salary of more than 2000 Euro per month – that's enormous in China – and also project resources, about 100.000 Euro per year. Other professionals get similar conditions. Lou's father for

example, is now the director of a university in Wuhan, director of a totally new department. He even received better conditions.

To most Chinese parents in this research a sense of belonging to the homeland remained, though only a minority considered a fulltime return attractive or retained some kind of myth of return. The option of sojourning or a biannual stay in the homeland after retiring and after the children had become independent was more broadly accepted. With the youngsters the picture was more diverse. While some appeared quite open to a potential return (fulltime or part-time), others were filled with horror by the mere idea, especially those who primarily identified themselves as Belgian and were sometimes found to revolt against all things Chinese, for instance, the Chinese language. Notably, the first group mainly incorporated some of the most ambitious pupils who, in addition, appeared very conscious of the ethnic glass ceiling in Flanders. With this group of Chinese youngsters, China's rapidly growing economy had piqued an image of a wider range of economic and professional opportunities. This group also included second-generation youngsters with roots in Hong Kong. Related to this, various Cantonese-speaking pupils were found to study Mandarin, and were stimulated by their parents, because of its perceived economic value in the globalized world economy. To these respondents, the skill of speaking Mandarin constituted an embodied form of cultural capital that was also increasingly valued in their local Flemish social field, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter. Naturally, not all youngsters aspired for a future fulltime move to China and the question remains, of course, whether youngsters will really be prepared to leave when the opportunity occurs in the future. Nevertheless, generally speaking, a significant number of young people clearly did not want to confine themselves to national borders and held the option of future mobility open, in or beyond Europe, by which no specific preference for a certain country or area was raised. As such, apart from being 'localised' in Flemish society, these youngsters simultaneously revealed snippets of what Sun has denoted as 'a transnational imagination' (Sun, 2003), which conflicts with the idea that transnationalism mostly plays a role for recent or first-generation migrants (Arzubiaga et al., 2009). Recently, Latham & Wu (2013) equally showed that there exists a high degree of mobility, transnationality and interaction among different Chinese communities in different EU Member States and beyond.

6. Summary

This chapter has presented the Chinese youngsters and parents' interpretations of a successful life and the reasons underpinning their aspirations and expectations for the future. Three main elements appeared paramount in youngsters' definition of a successful life. They desired: 1/ a (upper) middle-class lifestyle and a well-paid job, 2/ a stable family, and 3/ success in education. The latter was considered a prerequisite for reaching the two other goals.

The large majority of parents and pupils envisioned the youngsters' future with a traditional marriage and stable family in mind, which can be viewed as an offshoot of traditional Confucian philosophy within which the family is considered the basic unit of all humanity and the foundation for a sustainable community. The rising openness in China and the Chinese diaspora to alternative ways of partnership and family formation led some Chinese parents to question what was left of what is commonly considered a traditional cultural marker of Chineseness, namely the respect for the unity of the family. While pupils who maintained the dream of a traditional marriage and stable family likewise viewed this as 'something typically Chinese', those who deviated from that dream assigned themselves an identity which they denoted as 'Moroccanized', 'more Belgian', or 'not part of any group'. Their ethnic self-ascription mirrored recurrent feelings of non-belonging and a struggle with 'Chineseness' as the only possible identity. Although granted higher levels of freedom and autonomy, some of these youngsters suffered from intrafamilial and intergenerational conflicts, which however, did not lead those youngsters to totally abandon the centrality of the consanguineal family. Moreover, despite earlier scholarly findings pointing to a recurrent preference with Chinese diasporans for an endogenous marriage, many respondents in this study appeared willing to cross ethnic and religious boundaries in their selection of a marriage partner, either for themselves or for their children. This can be seen as a result of the limited number of potential Chinese partners in Flanders, and of the opaque entrenchment of religion and ethnic identity with Chinese diasporans resulting from a syncretism-synthesis axis. Respondents who were less or not inclined to cross those boundaries, mainly believed that cultural and linguistic differences would impede and complicate an out-group marriage. Nevertheless, overall exogamy was considered possible and positive, albeit upon one condition: partners needed to be open for and respect each other's religious freedom. The latter was viewed by some as rather problematic with adherents of Islam, whom they

identified with trouble, limited ambition and little tolerance and respect for other religious beliefs. Based on personal negative experiences with Muslim youngsters and subjected to Muslim's overall negative image in Flemish society and media, these respondents distanced themselves from their Islamic counterparts in a Barthian sense, thereby installing a clear ethnic boundary.

A second key finding has been the prevalence of high-level ambitions with respondents regarding youngsters' future educational and professional lives, reflecting a meritocratic ideal and the ideology of social mobility through education. Thereby the aspirations of pupils' and parents' appeared largely in accordance and relatively stable over time. Although the image with lower SES-families was somewhat more diverse, with them too high-level goals appeared normative. The meritocratic ideal is not unique to the Chinese, given the plethora of similar findings with other ethnic minorities in the west, especially with first and second generation of migrants. Nevertheless, many respondents framed their emphasis on educational success as part of their Chinese cultural heritage and as a symbolic marker of their Chineseness. Although to varying degrees the second generation attached importance to autonomy and self-realisation, it was found that the guiding Confucian ethic of *xiao* and the related concept of *mianzi* did indeed play a significant role in the goal setting of the Chinese families. *Xiao* emphasizes the responsibility of children for honouring the reputation of the family, for example through hard work and educational success, whereas *mianzi* idiomatically refers to one's social prestige. Furthermore, I argue that the focus with Chinese families on educational success as a cultural marker and the importance attached to *xiao* and *mianzi* is being revitalized, not only by the transnational Chinese ethnoscape and its concomitant 'imagined biographies', but also by the prevailing model minority paradigm.

A widespread belief was prevalent among respondents of a positive image of the Chinese in Flanders. Moreover, many parents and pupils clearly appeared to endorse the model minority paradigm, thereby discursively installing a demarcation between themselves as 'good migrants who are willing to integrate' and 'others, particularly the Moroccan and Turkish minorities, who did not'. Most often, these families were being recognized in their subscription to the model minority narrative by school teachers and leaders, who also clearly differentiated between on the one hand their Chinese pupils whom they complemented for their success-abetting behaviour and attitude, and on the other hand students from other ethnic backgrounds who were ascribed success-prohibitive behaviours and attitudes. School staff

were inclined to an 'ethnitization' of immigrants youngsters' educational success or failure and tend to ignore existing structures of discrimination and stigmatization in the education system and broader Flemish society; structures of which, to a certain degree, even the Chinese remain victims.

In addition to traditional cultural values and their reinforcement through the Chinese ethnoscape and model minority paradigm, also the families' minority status was found to reinforce their value attached to education. As a result of their cultural and/or linguistic differences, their phenotypical characteristics, and the ubiquity of the othering-mechanism with the dominant society, it was often difficult for respondents to escape Chineseness, which from their perspectives generated structural constraints on the labour market. Not only did most parents – particularly the higher educated and those who had experienced downward social mobility after migration – want their children to surpass the confinement of manual labour within the Chinese restaurant business, they also justified their emphasis on prestigious diplomas and jobs, by conveying that, as a minority, they had to overcompensate in order to attain equal status with whites. Some clearly feared racial preferences and an ethnic glass ceiling in the local job market. This perception of potential structural impediments encouraged a certain propensity with respondents towards geographical mobility, which with some parents was being reinforced by the home country's policy of luring back overseas Chinese with attractive salaries and positions. To conclude it can be stated that in most Chinese families, an agreement was understood between parents and students regarding academic and career aspirations for the future. However, Chinese youngsters should not be seen as mere puppets on a parental string. The data revealed the prevalence of negotiations between parents and children, by which in the end the choice for a particular education or career path was mainly directed by the concrete expectations of the youngsters. Having this said, according to Phillipson (2009), such an agreement between parents and children is important for children's academic achievement. One way to establish such an agreement, he argues, is through parental involvement in children's schooling. Therefore, whereas the previous section engaged in a description and interpretation of the said and lived aspirations and expectations of the Chinese youngsters and their parents, in the following chapter I take a closer look at how parents act as 'social mediators' in transmitting their ambitions through concrete involvement in their children's home and school lives (Phillipson, 2009).

Chapter 8

Parental involvement & adjustment to school context

The first part of this chapter delves more deeply into the ways Chinese parents act upon the aspirations they have set out. It does so by uncovering the different types and levels of direct Chinese parental involvement in children's schooling and by elucidating the ways in which the plurality of praxes in the given family contexts are perceived and understood by the different parties, including parents, pupils and Flemish school staff. This chapter equally includes an analysis of respondents' beliefs regarding the contribution of parenting to children's academic successes or hindrances. In the second part of the chapter, I take a closer look at the emic perceptions and lived experiences of pupils and parents concerning multicultural education and the position of their own cultural and linguistic capital in Flemish mainstream education.

1. Introduction

As demonstrated earlier, with most of the Chinese families in this study the children's education took centre stage. Academic success was viewed as a collective family solicitude and as part of children's duties vis-à-vis the family honor and the bond between relatives. For my analysis of Chinese parental involvement I depart from Epstein's broader ecological model of family engagement. In accordance with the socio-ecological underpinnings of this dissertation, Epstein's model sets out from the premise that parental involvement is context-dependent and should thus not be analysed isolated from the sociocultural, economic, political and historical life contexts in which families are living (Epstein, 2011; Hornby, 2011). Epstein identifies six types of parental involvement by which all have varying effects on children's educational outcomes. They are: parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, decision-making and collaboration with the community. Each type can be related to one of the systems in Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological framework. Parenting and learning at home are part of the family microsystem. The three subsequent types are related to the mesosystem which constitutes the point of intersection between the family and school

microsystems. The sixth type, 'collaboration with the community', adds the broader exosystem to the former microsystems and their interconnections (mesosystems). As a framework, Epstein's model embraces the multifaceted nature of the involvement and recognizes overlapping spheres of influence (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Hornby, 2011). Hence, in applying the model I do not merely look for similarities between families in parental involvement, but also account for observed differences and the variety of influencing factors.

The following analysis of Chinese parental involvement is inspired by Epstein's typology, yet not dictated by it. The different types of parental involvement were adapted to become broader categories for the purpose of allegiance to the research data. After all, Epstein's framework was mainly set up as a tool to assist educators in developing partnership programs between schools and families, and not as an analytical tool to consider and interpret parental involvement from an emic perspective. Apart from Epstein's framework, I also take into account the different domains of influential factors that affect the nature and scope of the parental involvement as described by Hornby (2011), as well as Samaey (2006) and Boerave & Van Rijn's (2010) seven dimensions of parent involvement.

2. Parenting at home

2.1. Parental role-construction: children's education as a shared responsibility

In order to understand parental involvement it is crucial take a closer look at the way parents view their own role in their child's education (Hornby, 2011). According to Smit, Driessen, Sluiter, and Brus, (2007), until recently, society was characterised by a clear division of tasks, whereby the nurturing was in the hands of the parents, while schools were exclusively held responsible for educating children. They go on to state that nowadays this distinction has largely blurred. Recently, the *Bet You!* Study found that diverging views between Flemish school staff and immigrant parents on home-school cooperation and on the role of each actor in the education of children sometimes gives cause to tense relationships between both parties. Many teaching staff members interviewed for the study believed that the responsibility for children's education ought to be shared between parents, schools, and even the broader society. They also asserted that a stimulating and education-oriented home

environment as well as parental involvement were prerequisite to the educational attainment of children. In reality, however, the actual situation did not meet up to their expectations. They claimed that schools were increasingly held responsible for the overall education of pupils while at the same time they barged into limited parental responsibility, especially with immigrant parents. In their opinion, this resulted from a lack of parental control, rule setting and support. Some even felt that despite the numerous initiatives undertaken by schools and migrant organizations, they were nonetheless fighting a losing battle; dealing with immigrant pupils' home environments was exceeding their capacity as teachers.

Looking at the mechanism of 'parental role construction' – which generally refers to parents' perceptions of responsibility for a child's education and which belongs to the 'belief dimension' of Samaey's and Boerave & Van Rijn's framework of parental involvement - is thus crucial (Boerave & Van Rijn, 2010; Lavenda, 2011; Samaey et al., 2006). Chao argues that many studies only regard parental *practices* as having an affect on children, while the indirect and cumulative effect of parental *beliefs* tends to be overlooked. She states that "parents may have an important impact on their children's schooling simply because they believe it to be so" (Chao, 1996, p. 404). Verhoeven et al. (2003) likewise found a significant effect of parental role definition and parents' active involvement in children's education at home and at school. Following this line of argument, I now turn to a discussion of the Chinese parents' perception of their own 'educative' role concomitant to that of the schools.

Overall in this study the Chinese parents discursively presented themselves and the schools as joint partners in the upbringing of children, which according to them enclosed the following main tasks: the transference of knowledge, the transmission of particular values and the normative regulation of behaviour. Although the respondents acknowledged these tasks as mutual responsibilities, they emphasized a notable division between primary and secondary roles and also distinguished between different 'duty-bearers'. With it parents predominantly ascribed the role of knowledge providers to schools, while they considered themselves primarily accountable for the induction of a moral and normative breeding-ground with their children. They believed that if the parental transmission of significant values and norms had not occurred early on in a child's life path, it was certainly not the school's duty nor within the bound of a school's reach to toil at repairing the accrued behavioural damage. Schools, so the Chinese parents stated, are only able to mould and strengthen what is already present with children. The main cited values of which parents most hoped that teachers would reinforce

them were: obedience, politeness, discipline and respect for authority. All these values, not by coincidence, coincide with the recurrently mentioned conception of *xiao* (filial piety).

> Mother of Ning: The task of the school is to educate the child, to transfer wisdom. The parents' task is much more important and starts much earlier. Even when your children are very small, you have to discipline them, because when they grow older, it becomes much harder to rectify their behaviour. And of course, children also learn how to behave in school, but parents bear the main responsibility.
>
> Mother of Chen Gao: It's the parents who teach the child what is allowed and what is not. That's something a child gets from his home environment, from his parents.
>
> Father of Terry: In general, the school is only a school. They have to teach knowledge from books. The actual upbringing or education is the parents' responsibility. That's what we always say anyway. Schools and parents should act complementary. We cannot say, as many people actually do: "Our son behaves badly and that is the school's fault". If students have problems – in our opinion mostly immigrant boys, although there are definitely also some Chinese youngsters too who behave badly – well, if there are problems, then it's the school's responsibility to inform the parents.

To a very large extent, this same line of thought was encountered with the Chinese youngsters as well.

> Sophie: The school should also teach you good manners, because some people just don't get that from home. So, the school should definitely focus on behaviour as well, although it's still mainly the parents who are responsible for that.
>
> Lei: School is about studying, about teaching you stuff like languages and science; it's about the curriculum. Most of the values I've received from home.
>
> Kristina Wu: Schools should offer students a good education, although they should also look at behaviour. Actually, behaviour is something for both parents and teachers. Schools' main task is to organize classes.

Occasionally, parents also expressed their appreciation for values that deviated from the Confucian tradition and that appeared more Western-oriented. These included the establishment of a "critical" and "creative mind-set" and "the ability or daring to express one's opinion through debate". This line of thought was mostly encountered with parents whom on average put less emphasis on *xiao* and allowed for more autonomy and independence with their children. The parents of the second-generation pupils Terry and

Meiying were exemplary in this respect. However, as with the mother of first-generation pupil Ning, the nurturing of critical thinking and *xiao* were not regarded as mutually exclusive.

> The mother of Meiying: For me it is also important that she is given the opportunity to express her own opinion. Usually Chinese people are afraid to give their opinion. But I think that's the influence of our culture. In China people tend to avoid discussion. We primarily focus on listening. However, I believe that Chinese people should dare more. At least, I hope Meiying will be in a better position to express her thoughts.

> The mother of Ning: Studying in China is very different from studying in Belgium. In Belgium pupils are allowed to ask many questions during classes and to give critical answers. In China, you're not allowed to give your opinion. Teachers expect you to just sit there, to listen and to take notes. To be honest, I don't think that suits Ning. He's very open and talkative. So the Belgian education system is better for him.

Nevertheless, despite the recurrent belief with respondents in mutual responsibility, one family appeared to have relied more heavily on the school for the education of their children. As opposed to the stability characterising the childhood years of most other pupils in this study, the past of Mei-Lan and Amber's family had been interlarded with impediments and ample instability due to family moves, bankruptcy, concomitant financial solicitudes, family conflicts, physical illness and general psychosocial distress. The respondents' narratives reveal that those events greatly disrupted the family bonds and traditional hierarchical role structures. Especially the dyadic relationship between the parents and their children was marked by recurrent conflicts, by which the daughters were inclined to accuse their parents (particularly the father) of being evasive to more Western perspectives and thus of acting too Chinese. Especially Mei-Lan had a quite a discordant relationship with her parents. Confronted with the impossibility to get a grip on Mei-Lan's behaviour, her parents sent her away to boarding school. In doing so, her they hoped that the school's educators would be able to reverse her overall rebelliousness and opposition to discipline and obedience. As a parental strategy, it however did not yield the expected results: Mei-Lan's relationship with her parents as well as her academic trajectory both remained tumultuous and full of hindrances. However, to some extent the intergenerational family bond appeared to have recovered in due course, in particular after the father started spending more time with his family at home, subdued his expectations vis-à-vis the school and started communicating more openly with his children on his particular set of parenting strategies and their impact.

Mei-Lan: Oh, the influence of the school…that was so overrated! They thought that boarding school would make my life better. Actually that it would make me better, because they believed it would make me well-educated. So, they actually shifted their own responsibilities to the school. Also stupid things, like, when I asked them: "Where do babies come from?" they just answered: "you will learn that at school". The school had to solve everything. [Laughs]

Father of Mei-Lan: I didn't really know what to do. I thought it was the school that had the biggest influence on children's behaviour. Now I know it's the parents. Behaviour is not something you learn at school, it is something you learn at home eh, with the parents. The task of the school is to give fair opportunities to all children and not say: "Ah, I love this kid, so I care more". That is not fair. The other child will lose interest in school and in learning. So, I think, the school ok, but the home is very important.

Amber: Our parents think differently, don't they?
Mei-Lan: Yes, they are Chinese, you know.
Amber: Yes, although it's better now than it was before. They have become more westernized.
Mei-Lan: Yes, especially dad. Oh, before he was so typically Chinese.
Amber: But you know, when we lived in Kortrijk, the business was not going well. Although my father had invested a lot of money and energy and time in the restaurant, it really didn't go well and for a while he was really, really depressed. And then he made my mom angry.
Mei-Lan: He was also not thinking logically anymore. At that time we were always fighting and arguing. I even literally ignored him for two months. But then it changed. Actually, he changed, since a year or two. He has come to realize that he should not only look at things from his perspective. Yes, he's really less Chinese now.
Amber: Yes, before he thought that because he was the father, he was also…
Amber + Mei-Lan [simultaneously]: …the boss! [Laugh]
Mei-Lan: He decided everything for us. We were never allowed to say something. And he didn't get it, that what he was doing was wrong. Now, he is more open to our opinions. Oh, it's much better now.

2.2. Parental expectations and the notion of constant self-improvement

In line with my earlier findings on parental aspirations, I found that the majority of the Chinese parents in this study expected their children to be dedicated and to give their all. This is concomitant to numerous research studies that in a consistent manner have reported on Chinese immigrant parents setting high performance standards for schooling with their children (Chao, 1996; Fang, 2000; Pels et al., 2009). Although a considerable group of pupils showed quite high performance patterns in terms of actual school marks, their parents often

seemed to aim higher. Many parents explained their behaviour as typical of Chinese mentality. A basic tenet of Confucianism is indeed the idea of constant self-improvement, rooted in the optimistic belief that people are able to progress as long as they are willing to invest in hard work (Chao, 1996; Fang, 2000; Watkins, 2009; Yen, 2014). Consistent with the meritocratic ideology of social mobility, various Chinese parents considered intelligence not as something innate or fixed, but rather the result of consistent effort. Yen (2014) argues: "Hard work is about transforming oneself and taking on a position that is not available at the present moment; it is not about prudence, but about dreaming the impossible dream" (Yen, 2014, p. 198). By emphasizing and reinforcing the Confucian cultural traits of effort and perseverance, parents encouraged their children to surpass the lower socioeconomic status of their families.

This reality was reflected by the students' narratives on the TAT Card BM1. TAT 1 shows a boy sitting at a table. He is looking at a violin placed in front of him. For the most part students' stories revealed optimistic expectations about being able to play the violin in the future, despite the internal or external impediments (a broken string, lack of talent or love for the instrument). Whereas some pupils conceived the task of mastering the violin predominantly as an individual endeavour, over half of the pupils mentioned the significance of parental support for reaching success. The notion of support is being defined by the pupils as 'getting help from their parents', but also includes the parental expectations of hard work and perseverance.

> Jiali's response to TAT Card BM1: I think it is about a boy. He plays the violin, but something has gone wrong during a concert or so, at a gig. A string has broken or something. And then he wanted to give up because he had failed and he never wanted to play the violin again. But somebody helped him to stand up again; friend maybe, but probably his parents. Later he became a good violinist.

> Sophie's response to TAT Card BM1: It's a boy who plays the violin. However, he really doesn't feel like playing the violin, neither does he feel he's able to. He's pondering over whether he should give up or not. He decides to persevere, because his parents want him to. Later on, he becomes a very famous composer and a marvellous violin player. Yes.

Nevertheless, it would be short-sighted to consider the parental emphasis on high marks and endurance solely as the offshoot of a cultural value system. After all, on many occasions parents also (in) directly referred to their family's migrant status, giving away the

perception that their children needed to prove themselves even more than most Flemish youngsters if they wish to obtain the same social position. This finding coincides with my earlier conclusions on the Chinese parents' relation to the ethnic glass ceiling.

> Mother of Sophie and Julie: So, I want her to keep on studying, until the maximum, until she's really tired. Only when she's really too tired and cannot really improve anymore, then it's ok. At the moment, however, I try to let her know that her studies are really, really important. That's all I can do.

> Mother of Chen Gao: "You know, our motto is: the better, the better! [Laughter] Yes, but this is the Chinese mentality. We believe one can always improve. For us it's like that. I always tell Chen Gao: "You ought to be the best. You can improve and keep improving. Then your ethnic background might not matter anymore!"

A considerable group of parents were quite result-oriented by setting high performance standards for their children. Some even expected their children to get at least an 8 on 10 on examinations. This particularly applied to the higher educated parents and/or to those who had arrived in Belgium on a more recent date. Their expectations generally mirrored those of parents subjected to the competitive Asian educational systems, by which high grades were believed to yield positive opportunities for the future. Yet, not all Chinese parents demanded suchlike elevated grades. Some merely wanted their children to succeed in the education form they were enrolled in at the time, which in most cases was ASO. Although the less-demanding group consisted of a larger number of lower educated parents, the relation between parental expectations and socioeconomic position is however not rectilinear. In line with earlier findings on parental aspirations and SES, I found that many lower-educated parents also set quite high standards regarding their children's school marks.

Ambiguously, many Chinese respondents, irrespective of socioeconomic background or generational status, expressed their appreciation for the less competitive nature of Flemish schooling in comparison to that of their home countries. On numerous occasions respondents attested to very high levels of pressure being put on children and parents in contemporary Chinese education and to being grateful for their children's and their own lucky escape. During my fieldwork in China, parents took me along to see bulletin boards hanging on Chinese schools' exterior walls which publicly displayed pupils' test scores. They overtly declared themselves against this Chinese practice and the way it compelled parents and students in China to an excessive and one-sided focus on school grades and to fierce

competition. However, this does not mean that they themselves were totally detached from such result-orientation. In stimulating their children parents often used comparison with their own childhood school experiences as an impetus. This highlights the influence of past encounters and childhood experiences on parental expectations (cf. Li 2001a).

> Jiali: My father often refers to the past. He always talks about how he managed to get good grades. He says: "My dad expected me to get at least a 9 or 10". He also has this story about this one time that he only got an 8/10. His father had been furious with him and had beaten him severely. That is why he always tells me: "When you get a 5 or a 6, you should be really happy that I don't punish you in the same way as my father did".
>
> Mother of Wu Guo: Yes, the secondary school years are very important for children in China. Failure in high school means failure for life. That is why there's so much pressure on families and parents during those years. All need to make sure that the child is focused on studies. It's all about study, study, and study. [Laughs] It's only after one has entered university that one can relax. When I compare my children to the children in China, I think about the latter: "Oh poor children. They still need to study so hard and they don't have time to play". Of course, my children have to study hard too. They have to do at least university.
> Anthropologist: At least?
> Mother: If possible I want one of them to get a PhD degree or something. That is my dream, because I didn't get it, so…
>
> Anthropologist: What do your parents expect from you?
> Sophie: They want me to get good marks and not repeat the year anymore.
> Anthropologist: And what does that mean 'good marks', enough to pass?
> Sophie: Oh, but I demand a bit more from myself than just passing a test. [Laughs] I want to have 70%.

In addition, some of the pupils – particularly first generation pupils, and pupils in ASO - appeared to have incorporated a similar orientation to high marks as well as an appreciation for peer competition, as demonstrated by the following extracts from interviews with pupils.

> Wu Guo: My friends in school and me always organize little contests. We like to compete with each other in order to score as high as possible. This is something you hardly see in Belgium. In my opinion, though, competition is healthy. At least it doesn't hurt. In China, with all those public scoreboards, there is true competition. Nobody wants to have his name in the last position. That is really tough competition. And as you know, competition is good to keep your mind sharp.

> Xiaoya: No. [Sighs] No. I don't think my school results are good. In my opinion you should get an average of 8 or 8.5 or something. I have more than nine for mathematics, but the other subjects were not as good. In China I had the highest scores of my class. So, I try to get better here as well.

Also Chen Gao's narrative in reply to the TAT1 Card (boy with the violin) shows a clear appreciation for peer competition as a means of success. It equally underscores children's wish to make their parents proud.

> Hm ... Pieterjan has no desire to play the violin, even though his father bought him a really expensive violin. The violin is brand new and still shines. Yes. Uh ... The boy wanted to be a singer instead of a violin player. [Laughs] So his father sat down with him and asked him, "Why don't play something for me?" The boy didn't want to. So, then his father sent him to a ... a camp, so to speak. It was a music camp specifically for players of stringed instruments, so no singers there [Laughs]. So he was ... Yes, so he had to play the violin. And finally after a few days on the camp he had made some very good friends who played the violin as well. And he also wanted to compete with them so he started practicing, practicing and practicing. He ... he ... well, he became better and better. Before he was very bad, because…come on, he didn't do anything. ... So, then he began to study much more. Yes, he wanted to compete with his friends. So, now he has become very successful. And yes, he has made his father proud. Eventually [smile].

When the nuclear family consisted of more than one child, then the expectations of parents sometimes varied depending on the specific child. It could be observed that during the period covered by this study, various Chinese parents re-adjusted their demands, which occasionally became apparent when parental expectations towards the elder and younger children were reviewed. In four Chinese families the eldest daughters complained about the fact that their parents have been quite demanding with them in the past, but currently acted much more loosely vis-à-vis the younger children. Pointedly all four firstborn youngsters showed a strong inclination to interfere and to serve themselves as the regulating, controlling, and standard-setting agent. As I will show later on, this partly has it root in the fact that Chinese parents, in particular the immigrant entrepreneurs, strongly relied on their eldest to assist in controlling the younger ones.

2.3. Parental control and discipline

When it comes to the rewarding of good school results various Chinese parents, regardless of their socioeconomic position, were found to display little open praise. According to the pupils this constituted a way for Chinese parents to spur their children on to continuous self-improvement. Chinese parents themselves indicated that it was a conscious choice to detach good school results from automatic rewarding, emotionally or materially. They generally conveyed the idea that it was by definition the child's duty to succeed in school, which again aligns with the general notion of *xiao*. Most often parents would give small present on unexpected moments, which was then interpreted as an act of stimulation, not as a real reward.

> Mei-Lan: For example, when we get a 9/10, then my mother's reaction is: "Ok" or just very drily: 'Ok, keep it that way'. Come on! Keep it that way? [With desperation in her voice]
> Amber: Yes, she is proud but she will never display that she is. She doesn't want to show us that she is happy, because that way she wants us to achieve even more.

> Ning: Yes! Every day during supper I talk to my mom about what happened at school and about how I did on my tests and then my mother likes to comment on what I tell her. […] When I say: "I did well on my test today", she then asks: "Was the test easy?" She always has these strange reactions. Then she wants to know if the test was maybe too easy or if the teacher hadn't prepared it well enough, amongst other things. [Laughter]

> Li-Na: I don't know if they're proud of us or not. They never tell us. No, only when I specifically ask for it. Proud? Maybe, I don't know. Also with regard to my school marks I don't really notice that they're proud. It's all a bit superficial, I think. You know, we make jokes at the table, reminisce together in the sofa and chat, but we're not so close. I mean we're not the cuddle or gooey types. You understand?

In contrast to many studies on Chinese parenting, which speak of a lack of parent-child intimacy and closeness (Lau-Clayton, 2010), the narratives of most respondents in this study gave evidence of a dyadic closeness between the children and their parents. However, they also gave away the sometimes-limited parental display of emotions. Many mothers and fathers did not shower their children with discursive expressions of love and pride. Instead they showed their affection through subtle or more overt actions that were aimed at children's learning at home, including assuring the conditions to learn (e.g. silence in the house,

exemption of domestic tasks, set up a study room for the children), making financial sacrifices for their children, getting up early in the morning to prepare healthy meals, bringing children to school by car so that they can sleep longer, and to ensure that children also have moments of relaxation (through play, sports…).

> Lou: My mother is strict and severe looked at from the outside. Internally she's actually the opposite, but she doesn't show that very often. She does do, for example, when I'm sick, or during the holidays she lets me play a little longer.

Another important way for Chinese parents to show their love to children was through parental control. One of the central concepts in Chinese child-rearing is that of "*guan",* which literally means 'govern' or 'discipline', but which in Chinese language also stands for 'love' and 'care' (Chao, 1997; Chen, Chen, & Zheng, 2012; Wu, 2011). Throughout this study various accounts revealed that the Chinese parents applied *guan* as a central strategy to foster children's educational outcomes. In fact, the concept of *guan* closely relates to that of *xiao* (filial piety). For many parents the acts of asserting control and disciplining their children were considered important means to achieve desirable values with their children, including *xiao* and obedience. As such, they exhibited both behavioural and psychological control, which they considered as a parental responsibility and a sign of care and love. The following quotes illustrate this quite clearly. It shows that some parents, particularly those who were higher educated, tended to set up a great range of rules and control mechanisms in order for their children to study well. The quotes are extracted from two different interviews with Chen Gao and one from an interview with the father of Kristina Wu.

> Chen Gao: I usually study at the table in the living room. My mother is sitting next to me then with her IPad, reading books. She loves to read books on the Internet. So she stays with me the entire time. And when, for example, I start daydreaming, she slams her hand on the table, giving me the message: "Chen Gao, you'd better concentrate!" On Tuesdays and Wednesdays she is out working, so then she's not around. But when she's at home… not always, but sometimes she sits next to me… Also, for example, when she is cooking. Then she also sits besides me at the table.
>
> Anthropologist: And when you say that you have finished your school assignments, does she believe you?
>
> Chen Gao: No [Laughs]. You know, I am not allowed to just go and play. She does allow me to have a five-minute break after diner. I usually watch television then. But after that I have to go back to the table. Otherwise she becomes angry with me. I have to study approximately 3 hours per day.

Chen Gao: I have already mentioned that my mother acts in extreme ways sometimes, especially in relation to school! Yes. For instance, she broke my IPod last week, on purpose, because I was playing too much with it. She just creased it, really.
Anthropologist: And how did your dad react to that?
Chen Gao: Oh, he agreed with her, because…you know, I was definitely in the wrong. My school grades are bad and I had promised my parents that I would read a book to improve my Dutch, but when my mother came in, I was busy with my IPod instead. So, yes, she was furious with me. But she was right to be furious. Sometimes Belgian parents let their children be, as long as the children are happy, but I don't think that's a good way to raise a child. For example, Emile, he is often busy playing games and he is more concerned with other things than school, and his grades are also quite bad. But his parents leave him be, because he's in an easier study track than I am. But ok, my mom, usually the day after such fury, she is nice to me again. And I know she does it because she loves me.

Kristina Wu's father: Some children are very impolite or…I don't know how to say this in Dutch… *wanpi* [Meaning: naughty, disobedient]. That is because there is not enough discipline in the house. Also I don't like it when children play too much. It's important for them to study and to work hard. In Chinese we say: "ben niao xian fei" [Meaning: clumsy birds should start early with learning how to fly]. Not all children are equally intelligent, you know, so they especially should study more and practice more.

The first two extracts reveal quite extreme examples of rule-setting and control. Other, less all-embracing examples of control mechanisms as applied by the Chinese parents were the supervision over sleeping patterns and the use of media (internet, TV, cell phones, etc.) as well as the control over children's free time and their social networks. The majority of Chinese students, particularly the girls, could not leave the house without asking for permission first and especially not after dark. Many pupils were brought to school by car and those who were not, often needed to come home immediately after school. Some parents only allowed their younger daughters to visit friends in the afternoons or evenings if they were chaperoned by an elder sister. Although differences could be observed in the degree of freedom parents allowed their children, in most families, the parents always wanted to know where their children were located, whom they were with and what they were doing. In general, parents exerted much control on the social networks of their children. Some pupils have cited that they were prevented by their parents from having contact with certain peers as these were believed to have a negative influence on their school career. However, being adolescents, the youngsters were not always totally docile, for example when it came to the general rule of not having a girl-or boyfriend before the age of 18. Another way for Chinese

parents to supervise their children was to keep a check on their school agenda's. However, this was sometimes hampered by language problems.

It is important to note though that not all Chinese parents in this study were as strict with their children as Chen Gao's mother. Although most were inclined to set a variety of rules vis-à-vis their children, to various parents the actual possibilities to exert control were rather limited. This was particularly true for parents who worked in the catering industry because they were mostly busy working in the evenings and weekends. These parents generally counted on a great deal of self-discipline with their children and were repeatedly found to convey the following message to their offspring: "It is your future and in the end, you are responsible for it!" Although the Chinese youngsters in this study tended to endorse the value of *xiao* as well as the idea of children being responsible for making their parents proud through academic success, some pupils indicated that exhibiting self-discipline was not always an easy task. Mei-Lan, for example, who was going through a quite bumpy school career, said that she would have liked her parents to exert more control. She believed that this would have positively influenced her school grades. On many evenings, Mei-Lan and her siblings were alone in the house. She often told me that she found it difficult to study or to concentrate on school assignments, as she was easily distracted and because her parents were not around to control her actions. Her mother was usually working in the restaurant of her brother-in-law, while, during the time of the study, her father was often away meeting friends or doing sports.

In some families, I could observe the elder siblings taking over the parental tasks of exerting control and disciplining children, whether or not with parents' approval. This fact was also clearly articulated by Terry throughout different interviews.

> Terry: My sister has a lot of difficulties with Dutch because in the past she has spent a lot of time with my aunt, and there she only spoke Chinese. This hampers her learning. So, we really have to push her to do her homework. "Do your homework! Do your homework!"
> Anthropologist: So, when do your parents tell her to do her homework? Do they come upstairs from the restaurant?
> Terry: Yes, or they use the house phone to call me and then they ask me to check on what my sister is doing. So, then I go to squeak into her room and if she is not doing what she's supposed to be doing – making homework or studying – then she is being punished.
> Anthropologist: And what kind of penalties do your parents give?

Terry: Uhm, first I start by taking away her computer. If she still doesn't listen, I lock the television with a code and when that still doesn't help, then I take away her phone.

Anthropologist: So, you decide on how your sister will be punished?

Terry: Yes, very often I'm the one who decides, because my parents are in the restaurant. But my parents do not always agree with my punishments. Sometimes they think I exaggerate. But I know my sister best and I also know what is expected at our school. So, I know how she must plan and what she must improve, and what steps she should take.

Although the expectations of Chinese parents were often high, bad school results were not by definition attached to actual punishments. In various cases parents verbally threatened punishment, but did not carry through those threats. Li-Na once called her parents "dogs whose bark is worse than their bite". Nevertheless, bad marks did sometimes have consequences, as for example an explicit ban on the use of various media (TV, internet, videogames, cell phone, etc.), withdrawal of presents, house arrest, or the obligation to repeat school subjects during school holidays. When children's school results were bad or disappointing, by and large all Chinese parents reacted with verbal messages, ranging from 'we expect you to do better next time' and 'it is your own future you put on the line' to 'you should put an end to your extracurricular activities'. Some youngsters recall their parents shouting, though most Chinese parents seemed to convey their message in a rather controlled but very clear-cut way and with non-verbal signs. In most cases the Chinese youngsters stated that to a certain point they could manage expressions of anger, but that signs of disappointment were almost unbearable to them, mirroring the importance of *xiao*. Often parents' facial expressions or their specific postures said more than words and were a sufficient punishment.

In some families the children made use of the strategy of negation in reaction to their parents' anger. They did so in a variety of ways: by not talking to their parents or by avoiding conversations on tests and school results.

Mei-Lan: Yes, we can give our dad the cold shoulder. We can actually ignore him for the rest of the month.

Amber: I did that once for a very short time and I felt really, really bad.

Mei-Lan: Oh, I can still do that. I can still ignore him, because… I don't sleep with him in the same room or anything as I do with you. For us it would be impossible not to talk to each other, but with dad… oh yes.

Chen Gao: Usually after school my mother wants to know how my day was and how I did on my tests. To avoid weighty conversations in the car I always tell her that everything went ok. (…) But at some point I have to show her my test results. (…) But if I would tell her that the test was difficult and that I was not sure whether I had done well, then she would nag at me about the bad test throughout the entire drive.

Anthropologist: Really? And what exactly does she say then?

Chen Gao: That I didn't study hard enough, that I have to work harder and that I need to stay concentrated… Yeah, those kind of things.

Anthropologist: And what else? Because when it lasts throughout the entire drive, she probably says more than that?

Chen Gao: Oh, but she keeps repeating the same things over and over again.(…) She thinks I am slow-witted, so she repeats the same thing over and over again, using different words of course, but the message remains the same.(…) On such moments, she also speaks very loudly, which I really don't like. Actually the ambience in the car is completely ruined then. And then I don't feel like talking anymore.

Anthropologist: So, you fall silent and she continues to talk?

Chen Gao: Yes, and repeating herself like a voice on the radio. Not that I do not agree with her on the importance of doing well at school. I know it's important for my future, but yes, I really don't like such rides.

In fact, both accounts testify to very different ways of reacting to parental authority. While the attitude of Chen Gao could be interpreted as a form of humility, respect to parental authority and concomittant anxiety with backchatting, the strategy applied by Mei-Lan and Amber by which they give their father the cold shoulder reflects much more an open conflict and active opposition on the side of the youngsters. A minority of Chinese parents asserted that their children did not longer respect or even accept some of their applied parenting methods. A good example in this respect is the use of physical discipline in the family.

Throughout this study, various Flemish school staff, pupils as well as a minority of parents reported on corporal punishments within Chinese families. According to Yue, the mother of Li-Na and Li-Zhi and also a social translator with many connections within the Chinese community, Chinese parents regularly apply this method to punish or assert control over their children. This finding coincides with the existing literature viewing Chinese parents as authoritarian, more open to the use of corporal punishment (Kwok & Tam, 2005; Lau, 2010; Lau-Clayton, 2014) and with the father being the principle disciplinarian of the child (Lau Clayton, 2014). It is believed that Chinese parents do not perceive the method as a punishment but rather as a way to encourage and discipline the child, which corresponds with

the Chinese focus on compliance with authority from a very young age (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Most studies hence suggest that the immigrant Chinese parents' use of physical discipline can be predicted in part by heritage cultural values. Lau (2010) and Lau-Clayton (2014), however, contests against a direct link between Chinese parenting ideology and corporal punishment. Their findings illustrate the need to consider other explanatory factors, aside from culture, in understanding the reasoning behind the use of physical punishments. Lau (2010), for example, found that beliefs in firm parental control were related to increased physical discipline only when parent-child acculturation conflicts were high. In the family of Mei-Lan and Amber such conflicts were a matter of course, especially between Mei-Lan and her father.

> Mei-Lan: Oh yes, in the past my father was convinced that he needed to be angry in order for us to learn something. I think it is because he was raised like that in Hong Kong. It was a completely different teaching method. When we were little, we often told our friends about the way our father treated us and then they felt really sorry for us. As a result my sister and I started behaving even worse. We wanted to show him that his method was useless. But then he punished us even harder. I now realise that he only wanted what was best for us, but he acted so completely different from the Belgian parents. You understand? My father thought that beating us was a justified pedagogical method. Fortunately he changed. He now wants to educate us in different ways. He also spends much more time with us and really wants to have thorough conversations.
>
> Amber: Previously he thought: "I am the father and I am the boss. You are the child and I know what's best for you". As children, we did realise that he wanted what was best for us, but he showed it to us in the wrong way and he just wouldn't realise it. He always said: 'I only want what is best for you, so I am right!'

In a later interview, the father of the two girls admitted that in the past there had indeed been many intrafamilial conflicts. While his daughters were striving for autonomy and independence, he had felt uncertain and scared of loosing substantial parental authority. So, yes, he disciplined them. However, he was increasingly confronted with stronger opposition from his daughters as well as from others in his close environment, including Chinese relatives. As Mei-Lan and Amber became more independent and aware of the cultural discrepancies between their home and wider societal norms, they openly started questioning the 'normality' and 'usefulness' of corporal punishment and other parenting methods. Important in the case of Mei-Lan is also the finding of Lau (2010) that Chinese immigrant children's school problems are strongly associated with the use of physical discipline by their parents. Although with time Mei-Lan's father appeared to have modified his ideologies about

childrearing and views about disciplinary methods due to the process of acculturation, the previous intra-familial and acculturation conflicts had clearly left their mark in the parent-child closeness and trust.

2.4. Parental support mechanisms

In this section I take a closer look at Epstein's fourth dimension of parent involvement, i.e. '*learning at home'*, which refers to the ways in which parents support their children in their schoolwork at home and offer direct help. In general it can be concluded that most Chinese parents could offer only little direct help regarding the content of school courses. Respondents attributed this to parents' lack of time or limited competences (cf. Samaey, 2006). Independent of their whishes and intentions, various parents felt they were lacking the right cultural capital, because their knowledge of Dutch was limited or because they had little knowledge of appropriate teaching methods due to their low education levels.

> Father of Amber & Mei-Lan: I do not know how to study. I do not have a study system. And of course you need some knowledge, therefore you go to school. I do not have a system. I mean, if I would know how to drive, I could teach my children how to drive. But I do not know how to drive, so I can't teach them!

Sometimes, in the case of mathematics and science, parents were capable of helping their children. After all, in the Chinese educational system a lot of attention is paid to these subjects, leaving Chinese parents and students with an advantageous position vis-à-vis their Flemish counterparts. Exceptionally parents could also help with language courses, especially English or French, depending on their migration background. In areas where parents' aid remained limited, siblings sometimes stepped in to offer support.

Given the limited capabilities of many Chinese parents to assist their children with schoolwork, they encouraged the latter to seek help from others, including brothers, sisters, friends or teachers. Occasionally parents would also ask teachers (especially at primary school) for additional exercises or books. However, this was almost always refused by the teachers involved, because the parents' request often did not arise from a problem situation, but from the belief that within the Flemish education children are granted too much free time. As such, some parents brought exercise books from China or Hong Kong. However, as for

example the mathematical methods applied in China are not always the same as in Flanders, for some children this caused confusion. Very often the children were also urged to find a solution themselves, for example, on the Internet or in the library, or to overcome the more difficult study content by continuous repetition of the material. It is clear that Chinese parents strongly relied on a high degree of independence with their children, especially as they got older. In case a certain problem would persist, then many parents appeared willing to ask the school for remedial teaching or in other cases, they would search for private tuition. Almost all the Chinese in this study had at least received private tuition once. This accords with the growing presence of cram schools or "shadow education" (Dronkers & Heus, 2010) in the Asia-Pacific region aimed at enhancing children's overall educational performance. As for the parents in Hwang's study (2014), the Chinese parents in Flanders regarded this kind of after-school tuition as a fundamental family responsibility and investment. As such, when walking into a Chinese restaurant, one can sometimes find an ad hanging on the wall demonstrating that the family is looking for a private teacher.

3. Analysis of school and study choice

The finding that the Chinese respondents considered the school as an institution an important partner in the education of children, leads me to take a closer look at the families' strategies concerning school and study choice.

3.1. School characteristics that determined school choice

Based on the Act on equal opportunities in education, each pupil in Flanders has the right to choose a school according to his/her (parents') preferences (Ministry of the Flemish Community, 2005). Various authors have shown that the reasons guiding this choice strongly differ between ethnic groups (Crul & Heering, 2008). For every Chinese family involved in this research the decision for selecting a primary school was in the hands of the parents. Overall, the primary school choice seemed rather stable and their most cited reason for choosing a specific institute was its proximity to the family house. With respect to secondary education, the overall image is rather different.

To a large extent, in Flanders the selection of a school constitutes the choice for a specific educational network. Since the School Pact of 1958 three main networks exist in Flanders by which each one depends on a different governing body: 1/ the subsidised public network run by provinces and municipalities, 2/ the subsidised public network of the Flemish community, also called 'community education', and 3/ the subsidised privately run network. The private network roughly makes up 70% over the total number of schools in Flanders and mainly consists of Catholic institutions. It is also in this network that the vast majority of the Chinese pupil respondents could be found.[94] Enumerative data derived from the *Bet You!* survey revealed that this could not be attributed to my application of the snowball sampling method when searching for respondents, because throughout Flanders, Chinese pupils appear to be overrepresented in the privately run network.

Notably, only for three Chinese families in the study the selection of a Catholic school was motivated by religious beliefs. In all other cases alternative school characteristics had been decisive in the choice for a particular school. One of the most recurring elements in the respondents' accounts appeared to be the reputation of the school (Hwang, 2014). They thereby considered Catholic colleges and grammar schools[95] as the most reputable educational institutions in Flanders. This is a general phenomenon in that area and can largely be explained by historical facts. Until the 1950s and 1960s children with bourgeoisie backgrounds predominantly populated the Flemish Catholic schools, while the public network mostly accommodated pupils from blue-collar backgrounds (Hirtt et al., 2007). Historically there was thus a clear division between education networks and institutes based on social class. However, with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants during the 1950s and 1960s of the last century, the existing socio-economic segregation in education was also given colour, leading to cultural-ethnic segregation and a division between 'white' versus 'black' or 'concentration' schools.

Various authors demonstrate that although in the last decennia the discrepancy between the different networks has strongly diminished as a result of the freedom of education and of school choice, the overall (school) segregation of pupils in secondary education on the basis of socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and national background has

[94] On a total number of 26 pupils, only five were enrolled in subsidised public education.

[95] Refers to the kind of secondary educational institutions that in Flanders are usually known as *lycea*

remained present (Hirtt et al., 2007; Kavadias, 2013; Nicaise & Desmedt, 2008) or even increased (Wouters & Groenez, 2013). In agreement with this statement, Jacobs speaks of "the social determination of school and study choice" (Jacobs et al., 2009b, p. 57). The freedom of school choice has allowed families to freely shop in education land and therefore created a quasi-market system by which schools compete for the better students (Hirtt et al., 2007; Kavadias, 2013; Littré, Demeuse, Derobertmasure, Friant, & Nicaise, 2008). In that sense, not only are there significant differences between individual and groups of students regarding educational attainment, but also between schools. Proceeding from the findings that the Chinese families regarded education as a major means to success, set ambitious expectations for the future and regarded schools as important partners in the education of their children, their strategy of enrolling their children in historically reputable secondary schools should thus not come as a surprise. They strategically opted for those educational institutions of which the hierarchical importance was deeply anchored in the mind-set of the average Fleming.

> Lucas Lee: I prefer Catholic schools. I've never been enrolled in a public school, so I don't really know the difference, but it's just that…you know, Catholic schools generally have an exemplary role, much more than public schools.
>
> Interviewer: How would you define a good school?
> Father of Jacob: A good school has a history and is reputable.
>
> Terry: My parents chose my school. In the past, the school was very famous for its discipline. It had a really good name and students had to wear a uniform. That was important to my parents.

According to the Chinese respondents these 'reputed schools' were characterised by a number of other key elements that they equally considered essential. As some of the most cited features, 'discipline' and 'stringency' were, in turn, being related to higher education levels, favourable study climates and ambitious and well-behaved peers. When stringency and discipline were concerned during interviews, parents thereby repeatedly made comparisons with the educational systems of Hong Kong and China. Most of them were convinced that schools in their homeland acted too strictly in academic discipline and were too competitive in nature. However, the Belgian schools were often looked upon as too lax. Various parents indicated that if they were to be offered a choice, they would strike the golden mean between both education systems. Other scholars made similar observations amongst Chinese

immigrant parents in Canada (Lary & Luk, 1998) and Australia (Inglis & Wu, 1994). Nevertheless, an overall inclination was found with the Chinese parents to select schools that in their opinion most resembled the educational system of the country of origin, especially with respect to disciplinary beliefs and practices.

> Father of Terry: We chose the school, yes. The school is a bit strict and that attracted us. It's also a more difficult school and there are less ill-mannered children.
>
> Mother of Sophie: All schools have their good and bad sides. The school of my daughters used to be a very strict school. My brother's daughters went there before, so I know. However, it is not anymore and that is not so good in my opinion.
>
> Father of Chen Gao: Yes, we chose this school because it's a very strict school, with a lot of good discipline. To us that's the most important.
> Mother of Chen Gao: For the teachers in that school, the most important thing is that their students study well and get good marks. So, they push their pupils. Some people don't agree with such focus on scores, but we have the same mentality. According to Chinese mentality children ought to study hard. In China teachers are very strict with their pupils, even at the level of early education, much stricter than in Europe or Belgium. Although there are still many differences between Chinese and Flemish education, the way of teaching in Chen Gao's school mostly resembles the Chinese approach. That is why we chose the school. They focus on study; there's discipline and the teacher has authority. So, it's a bit like in China, a bit traditional.
> Father: And of course also because of its high educational level. The level of the students of Chen Gao's school is much higher than that of pupils from other schools, and they are also much politer.
>
> Mother of Li-Na & Li-Zhi: It's a Catholic school and it's strict. I like that. A school should impart discipline to their pupils. They should also teach their pupils how to study and they should push them to study really hard. That is very important. Here, pupils are given too much freedom at school. That is my personal opinion. My former school in Macao was really strict. I found that very good. Here, there are many children who don't study well and thus get very bad marks. Schools shouldn't just leave them do. That is not good for the children. They should push children more. In China, children would get good grades after they were been given more homework, and maybe more punishment as well [Laughs].
> Interviewer: Have you ever considered switching schools?
> Mother: No, no. It's about the same everywhere. In general, in Belgium schools are not strict enough, especially in comparison to Macau.

By referring to their schools as 'toffee-nosed' or 'elitist', some pupils betrayed a certain level of cynicism regarding their parents' preference for reputable educational institutions. However, in their own definitions of a good school their parents' valuations were

largely mirrored. They too appeared to emphasize the importance of a school's reputation, discipline, and educational level.

Anthropologist: Imagine that you arrived in a new city and that you had to choose a school. Which elements would be important then?
Sophie: I prefer a school, like mine, that is strict and with a uniform over a school where the type of clothing doesn't matter. I prefer a Catholic school. In the morning, when I take the bus to school, I always come past two other schools. The pupils there are always smoking and they wear weird cloths, like emo- and skate-style and stuff. When I compare those schools to religious schools, like my school, I think my school has a much classier aura than those two others. I think most Catholic schools do: think of Saint-X, Saint-Y, and Saint-Z. All are quite distinguished schools.

Jiali: The level of the subject material should be high and it should also be a strict school. I like strict schools, actually.

Terry: To me a good school…Honestly, I must say that…I went to three good schools and I think Saint-Y is a very good school, regarding the educational level and the kinds of students that graduate from it. Well, you know, sometimes they are a bit swell-headed, like: "look at me, I come from Saint-Y!" Saint-Y has always been known as a distinguished school, but not to the same extent as Saint-Z, which is a truly racist school. In Saint-Y they are very strict, yes, and I like that.
Anthropologist: If you could describe your perfect school. How would that be?
Terry: The perfect school to me is a school with a lot of discipline. There should be room for jokes, but study should remain the most important thing. There should be a good balance between the two, like there was in my first school, school X [Focus school in Antwerp]. You should also have a bond with your teachers; otherwise classes are just no fun. Well, if you ask me, the best school has been school X for me.

Chen Gao: My school is actually really good. There's a lot of discipline and stuff. When you, for example, compare my school [Focus school in Ghent] to school X, then you see really big differences. Pupils in my school are much more polite.

Anthropologist: Why did you decide to go to another school?
Amber: Hoh, at first I didn't realize school X was a bad quality school. I was naïve. Then somebody told me that my school had a really bad reputation in the city. I really didn't know. Hoh, it had been a stupid choice from the beginning. I was very late when I started looking for a new school, so all the schools that I had in mind were full already. School X still had some places, so I went there. But then I started looking around and I saw that my friend was right. Then I realized that if I would graduate from that school people would think bad of me. It's really a mob school, you know. So I had to change. I didn't want people to think of me as mob. I wanted to graduate from a good school. Also, it would not have been good for me to keep hanging out with my schoolmates there. The group was a bit fringe, you

know, and they all had different nationalities – Turks, Russians, Albanians…- and most of them were against Belgians. I don't have anything against Belgians, so I couldn't really associate with them.

Apart from discipline and stringiness, yet another important variable appeared decisive in the choice for a particular school, namely the composition of the school's student population. The significance of this variable mostly emerged as a leitmotiv in the narratives of the Chinese parents, and to a much lesser extent in those of their children. As a result of educational segregation in Flanders, selecting a 'reputable' Catholic school in reality often signifies choosing for a school with a limited number of immigrant children. In many cases, the Chinese families had made a conscious choice for "white schools". Concomitant to the specific values parents wished to see perpetuated with their children, they were also very apprehensive at the potential impact of peer influence at school. Many parents believed that ambitious peers who encouraged their own children to study well were mainly to be found in reputable, white, Catholic schools. Schools with large populations of immigrant students were generally avoided because of their association with less discipline, lower education levels and ill-behaving students with limited educational orientation or ambition. As shown earlier, especially Muslim peers were being perceived negatively.

Father of Samuel: He first went to Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege, but then they combined this school with another school and a lot of Moroccans and Turkish youngsters started arriving. And they fought a lot. That is why I changed Samuel to another school (focus school in Antwerp). I didn't want him to be beaten up or to get a bad influence. As I told you before, education if very important in the Chinese mind.

The focus school in Antwerp can be considered a maverick in this regard. Having approximately 200 pupils with over sixty different ethnic backgrounds, the school was everything but white. However, it had been until the 1980s when the first Chinese students started to arrive. At the time of the inquiry it still bore quite a good reputation in Antwerp, particularly with the Chinese community within which the school was generally recommended to one another. Some parents did, however, express fear for the erosion of the school's reputation due its ever-growing ethnic diversity.

Mother of Jiali: School X is a good school. At least, it was.
Interviewer: It was? It isn't anymore?

Mother: No, not so much. There are a lot of Moroccans now, much more than before. The Moroccans are no good people! In my shop, there are always Moroccans and they steal from me, and they also steal in the school.

Generally the recently migrated Chinese families displayed a decision making process that was initially based on different variables than that of the more established Chinese community. While for the latter the final decision mostly resulted from a very conscious quest prompted by the above-stated variables in which they also inquired of friends, colleagues, Belgian acquaintances or customers, school staff and even visited different institutions themselves, the former parents appeared to choose a school merely on the basis of proximity or the presence of an OKAN-class. In the case of Ning, another third element had been decisive. For Ning to learn Dutch as fast and efficient as possible, his mother had looked for a school with limited to no other Chinese pupils present. Strikingly, the longer the families resided in Flanders, the more their preference for certain schools started to be based on the same variables as those adhered to by the more established Chinese families. For instance, whereas the presence of other minority youth was initially not an issue, it did become one after a certain period of time.

Father of Kristina Wu: Before, I thought the school was ok, but now I don't like it anymore. It's not really Belgian eh? Almost all students are foreigners. It might even be that a 100% of the students are foreign.
Interviewer: And you don't like that?
Father: No, because I fear that the quality of education is less. That's what I think eh, maybe it's not true. But Kristina doesn't want to change. She's used to the school now. Generally though, the Chinese living here say: "The more native Belgians in a school, the better." It's not that I am against Muslims, but when there are only Moroccan or Turkish pupils, the Chinese don't like that.

3.2. Study choice: decision making process

At the start of secondary education, the decision must be made whether the youngsters will be enrolled in the first grade A or first grade B, both consisting of two years of schooling. The B-grade is intended for young people who have fallen behind during their former school trajectory or for those who appear less suitable for the (more) theoretical A-stream. Much statistical data from Flanders has proven that it are mostly immigrant youngsters who are subject to an educational leeway when entering secondary education. They also start in the B

stream twice as much as their native counterparts, although significant disparities have been observed between different immigrant groups (Duquet et al., 2006; Groenez et al., 2003). While in theory the youngsters from the B-track can move on to the first year of the A-track after one year, in reality most just stay on in vocational training (Groenez et al., 2003). After the first grade youngsters must choose again, this time between four different education forms: general education (ASO), technical education (TSO), vocational education (BSO), artistic education (KSO). Every student obtains the diploma of secondary education after successfully completing six years of ASO, TSO or KSO or seven years of BSO. With a degree in secondary education a young person has unrestricted access to higher education.

The Chinese parents and pupils interviewed for this research generally aimed for the highest education form at the onset of secondary education. As stated before, apart from Tom, all pupils had begun their secondary school trajectory in the A-stream and within that stream they were found in the highest courses of study (ASO courses), except for Amber who had started in TSO. By all means, the general overrepresentation of Chinese pupils in ASO is related to the families' aspirations and expectations for the future, as outlined in the previous chapter. I repeat that, with the exception of the parents of Tom, Yulian and Sam, all parents in this research expected their children to go on to higher education, preferably university. Moreover, despite the sometimes-limited knowledge with Chinese parents of the Flemish education system, they nevertheless appeared very much aware of the distinctive value judgements attached to the various education forms (ASO, TSO, BSO, and KSO) and institutions. As is generally the case in Flemish society, also within the Chinese community, ASO held the highest regard and reputation. Most of the Chinese pupils were able to continue on this initially chosen path, though seven pupils had to make the transition to the technical or vocational education form. Mei-Lan, exceptionally, prematurely left school without obtaining any qualification. Moreover, five students were found to have repeated at least one year of secondary education.

Initially, all Chinese parents and pupils in this research considered changing to a technical or vocational track as something to be avoided, even at times when pupils clearly struggled to keep their heads above water. Moreover, on various occasions it could be observed that when schools suggested a transfer to the technical track, Chinese parents appeared to take no notice of the school's advice. According to some of the school teachers

this was a recurrent and by times also 'problematic' phenomenon with severe consequences for the wellbeing of the child.

> Teacher (Antwerp): I also think that Chinese parents in general are quite strict and have very high expectations for their children. And often unrealistic… I mean their expectations do not always match the skills and abilities of the child. Their child will and must stay in the general track, although we sometimes think the child would be much better off in TSO. Sometimes it happens that we have to give an orienting B-certificate[96] to a Chinese pupil, because we consider the track to be too difficult and hard for the child. We then advise them to change to the technical track. However, some Chinese parents just don't want to hear about it because in their opinion their child has to stay in ASO. That's a must.
>
> Interviewer: And do you feel you still have some say in the choices that are made by and for the students?
>
> Teacher: They listen to our advice, they nod politely, but in most cases they eventually stay with their own decision, that is: their child must remain in ASO, preferably in the scientific or mathematical track and thus repeat the year.

Clearly, the Chinese parents in this research were not in favour of having their child transferred to a lower track. They instead preferred their child to repeat the year. Notably, most of them also invested quite some time in obtaining a clear view on the reasons for failing: was it the result of laziness and a lack of discipline on the part of the child or did the academic level truly exceed the child's ability? From their overall emphasis on effort rather than on innate ability, Chinese parents were generally inclined to stimulate – or force - their child to work hard, to further develop their abilities and to persevere, prior to accepting the inevitability of a track change. Nevertheless, it could be observed that some parents let their children make freer choices or altered their perspective and attitude over time. Although in many cases parents had decided on the specific school choice, albeit sometimes in consultation with their children, it was clear that as the youngsters grew up, their opinions, ideas and preferences were increasingly taken into account. In some cases parents liked to see their child making the transfer to the technical track, chiefly for the sake of their self-confidence, health, or to stop "losing time", while the youngsters themselves wanted to stay on in the general track, because there were no technical disciplines that particularly interested

[96] On the end of each school year students receive a final school report to which a certificate is attached. There exist three different certificates. A student who has passed receives an A-certificate and the end of the school year. A B-certificate means the student can go on to the next year, but is excluded from a number of disciplines. In case the students hold on the excluded discipline, he or she must repeat the year. A C-certificate means that the student has not passed and needs to repeat the year, by which a change of study track within the same year is allowed. (Source: http://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/onderwijs-en-wetenschap/diplomas-en-getuigschriften/attest-b-attest-c-attest-het-secundair-onderwijs)

them, because they were keen on going to higher education, or just because they did not want to loose their circle of friends.

Mother of Sophie and Julie: Yes, I want her to be happy, that's the main point. I want her to be able to follow the lessons. Several years ago, my husband and me, we pushed her very hard. We told her things like: "Are you stupid? How come you don't study well?' At that moment, the only thing that mattered to us, were her grades. But we've changed. Now we think: "Ok, she's a teenage girl; her studies are very important, but not everything! When the studies are too hard, when they make you crazy and make you hate studying, that is not good. It's better to study something that you can handle, because then you feel competent and you succeed. That is what I am thinking now. We've changed. When you can't keep up in ASO, and you're not happy and you always cry, it doesn't help when the parents put even extra pressure on the child. It's just the other way around. So, last year I asked her: "Ok, do you want to repeat the year or do you want to go to TSO?" Me personally, I preferred the latter, but she didn't want it. I said: "Ok, you may choose, it's your own choice, but you have to know that if you want stay at this school, you will have to work hard". That's all I can do, right? Or I can search someone to give her some private tutoring, but I don't want her to waste too much time.

Teacher (Antwerp): Li-Zhi, yes, she changed schools. She went to TSO. In her second year, I remedied her for mathematics, and I must say, those are usually not the best students that I remedy. And then in the third year she started in my 5-hours-mathematics class. I then told her: "Li-Zhi, I have nothing against you" – because really, it's an adorable child – "but I think you're not in the right place here". I told her mom the same at the parent-teacher meeting in the first semester. And then her mother told me it was not her own choice, but really that of Li-Zhi. She said: "We don't oblige Li-Zhi to take the 5-hour-mathematics course, it's really her own choice!" So, as we had expected, at the end of the year, Li-Zhi received a B-certificate. We then advised the parents to send her to a TSO-discipline, which they also did. But that was actually quite exceptional. Usually Chinese parents refuse to do that.
[…]
Mother of Li-Zhi: Li-Zhi is now studying in TSO.
Anthropologist: Yes, I've heard. How was this decision made?
Mother: She decided herself. Every time at the parents-teacher meetings the teacher asked me if I expected a lot from my children. I always replied: "Yes, of course I expect a lot from them, but I also give them a lot of freedom. They themselves can choose their school track, but I expect them to take responsibility for their choice. Ok, and now she eventually decided to change schools and study track and so I accompanied her to the other school. Initially I thought: "Gosh, it seems a lot less neatly as in her former school", but Li-Zhi said: "Yes mom, after all this is TSO eh".

Father of Terry: For a while Terry studied technical sciences (TW), but after a few weeks she felt that it was too difficult for her. She didn't think she would be able to cope with it for the following two years. Also the mentality of the children was very different, quite snobby actually. She really didn't feel good at that school.

> Mother of Terry: Oh yes, she worked hard every weekend, but I told him [Terry's father]: "Oh my god, she cannot go on like that. She is not happy. It's really very difficult and I can see that she's really trying, but…I think she should do something else. I can't stand seeing her like that.

4. Summary

The first part of this chapter delves more deeply into the ways Chinese parents act upon the aspirations they have set out regarding their children's future. I have look at different types and levels of Chinese parental involvement and analysed how the plurality of praxes were being perceived and understood by the different parties, including parents, pupils and Flemish school staff. In the first section of this chapter, I took a look at the mechanism of parental role construction, or the way parents viewed their own educative role concomitant to that of schools. It was found that the respondents considered both parties to be joint partners in the education of children. A distinction was made between two roles: schools were seen as the main duty bearers regarding the transfer of knowledge, while parents were believed to be primarily accountable for installing a moral and normative breeding-ground with children. Parents expected schools to reinforce specific values and norms that largely coincided with the conception of *xiao*. They, however, also appreciated some of the more Western-oriented values passed onto children in Flemish education, including critical thinking, creativity, and verbal skills.

Many parents were quite result-oriented and set relatively high performance standards with their children. Differences could be noted between and within families, but the relation between parental expectations and socioeconomic position was, however, not rectilinear. Some of the lower-educated families were also found to set high standards. Moreover, more realistic views compelled some parents to lower their standards in due course. Consistent with the meritocratic ideology, many parents endorsed the idea of constant self-improvement, thereby encouraging their children to work hard and to persevere. Although both parents and children expressed appreciation for the less competitive nature of Flemish education in comparison to Asian schooling systems, some children also appeared to value peer competition as a means to success.

In alignment with the general notion of *xiao,* respondents considered it as the child's duty to perform well in school. Parents were found to display little open praise in rewarding of school results. Bad school results sometimes led to actual punishments though not always. Seeing parents' disappointment was often a sufficient punishment for youngsters, which again mirrors the importance of *xiao.* A dyadic closeness existed between children and parents, by which parents mainly showed their love through actions that were aimed at children's nurturing and assuring the right conditions for children to learn. Due to limitations in cultural capital (not speaking Dutch, being low educated), not all parents could offer direct help with schoolwork. They counted on youngsters' ability to overcome problems by working hard(er) or they turned to elder siblings, teachers and private tuition. The latter also occurred in cases where there were no learning problems with children, which accords with the growing presence of cram schools in the Asia-Pacific region. Another central strategy for parents to foster their children's educational outcomes was through *guan*, which stands for 'discipline' but also for 'love'. Through *guan,* parents expected to install desirable values and behaviour with their children, including *xiao* and obedience. Especially higher educated parents were inclined to set up great range of rules and control mechanisms at home. Although differences could be observed in the degree of freedom parents allowed their children, many did control the filling-in of children's time as well as the social networks of children. Some parents were also found to make use of corporal punishments to discipline and assert control over children; especially in families characterized by parent-child acculturation conflicts. Nonetheless, due to the nature of parents' professional activities, for some parents their actual possibilities to exert control over children were rather limited. They counted on a great deal of self-discipline with their child, which was sometimes difficult for children, especially for those who were experiencing learning difficulties. Sometimes elder siblings took over the *guan*-role from their parents. Children appeared to react to parental authority in different ways, with some accepting it and others engaging in active opposition and open conflict.

The next part of this chapter set out to analyse the families' strategies concerning school and study choice. It was found that the Chinese pupils were overrepresented in the privately run school network, which mainly consists of Catholic schools. Proceeding from the findings that the Chinese families regarded education as a major means to success, set ambitious expectations for the future and regarded schools as important partners in the education of their children, this strategy of enrolling their children in historically reputable secondary schools was not a surprise. Parents and pupils alike associated those schools with

higher levels of discipline, stringency, ambitious and well-behaving students and favourable study climates. Parents also tended to appreciate Catholic schools because, in their opinion, these schools most resembled the education system in the country of origin with respect to disciplinary beliefs and practices. Also the composition of these schools' student population, i.e. predominantly white, had played a decisive role, especially for parents who were more apprehensive at the potential impact of peer influence at school. The focus school in Antwerp, a truly mixed school, was a maverick in this regard. Although in the opinion of the respondents, still school still bore a quite good reputation, some respondents did express fear for the erosion of the school's reputation due its ever-growing ethnic diversity. The more recently migrated parents tended to choose schools more on the basis of proximity or the presence of an OKAN-class. The longer the families resided in Flanders, the more their preference for certain schools started to be based on the same variables as those adhered to by the more established Chinese families.

At the onset of secondary education, the Chinese parents and pupils generally aimed for the highest education form (ASO), which by all means relates to the families' aspirations for the future. They appeared very much aware of the distinctive value judgements attached to the various education forms and institutions in Flanders. Initially, all respondents considered a shift to TSO or BSO as something to be avoided, even at times when pupils were clearly struggling and were advised by teachers to change school tracks. Parents instead preferred their child to repeat the year. According to some of the schoolteachers, this was a recurrent and by times also 'problematic' phenomenon with severe consequences for the wellbeing of the child. On the other hand, I found that many parents invested quite some time in obtaining a clear view on the reasons for their child's failing. From their overall emphasis on effort rather than on innate ability, Chinese parents were initially inclined to stimulate their child to work hard and to persevere, prior to accepting a track change. Nevertheless, as the research progressed, some parents clearly started to allow their children to make freer choices; they altered their perspectives and attitudes over time.

In the next chapter, a glance is cast on the afterschool time use of the Chinese youngsters and how these form part of the broader family strategies for education.

Chapter 9

Afterschool time use

Down time can be spent in a variety of ways. Expectations regarding the design and purpose of down time differ significantly between and within different social groups in society and are found to have divergent effects on academic achievement (Danish, Taylor, & Fazio, 2007). This chapter provides an overview of the afterschool time use of the Chinese youngsters and links it to a more in-depth analysis of the complex interactions between education, leisure participation, ethnicity and integration. The broad concept of 'leisure' or 'afterschool time use' is subdivided into formal recreation, informal down time and labour market activities. In each of these sections light is shed on the distinct concrete activities the Chinese pupils were found to engage in and the question is raised how these form part or relate to broader family strategies for education.

1. Ethnicity and participation in organized activities

Organized activities consist of leisure activities that are marked by a structured and institutionalized character (Van de Walle, Cardoen, & Bradt, 2013). They refer to "a broad range of adult-sponsored activities that fall outside of the regular school curriculum and include diverse contexts such as school-based extracurricular activities, community organizations, and youth development programs. They are generally voluntary, hold regular scheduled meetings, are supervised by adults, include other participants, are organized around particular competences and tend to be rule-based" (Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010: p. 576-577). In Flanders organized activities encompass – amongst others - sport clubs, youth organizations (e.g. Scouts, Chiro), cultural associations (e.g. music-, art-, or theatre academy) and minority organizations aimed at youth (Vanhoutte, 2007). Most findings on the involvement of children and young people in organized leisure activities in Flanders originate

from the JOP Research Platform[97]. It shows that a large majority of the youth takes part in a variety of organized after-school activities; only six per cent appeared to have never participated in some sort of organized activity in opposition to 2/3 of young people who asserted to be still active in organized activities at the time of the first JOP-monitor (Vanhoutte, 2007). This corresponds to other numerical data found for Ghent and Antwerp (Van de Walle et al., 2013).

Several studies in Flanders and elsewhere have nonetheless shown that members of ethnic minorities and immigrant communities participate less in organized outdoor activities than members of the dominant society and that this might have an impact on their general social development and wellbeing (Pels et al., 2009; van Wel, Couwenbergh-Soeterboek, Couwenbergh, ter Bogt, & Raaijmakers, 2006). Pels et al. (2009) for instance, discusses the opportunities that leisure activities might offer for social bonding, which many immigrant youngsters are missing out on. In contrast to the findings of these studies, most Chinese pupils in this research were found to take part in at least one recurrent formal outdoor leisure activity. At the same time various parents showed active engagement in searching meaningful and attractive formalized youth activities for their children and were found to fill in their children's leisure agenda with specific extracurricular activities.

In most studies the analysis of the interplay between leisure involvement and ethnicity is based on the "marginality-ethnicity paradigm" (van Wel et al., 2006, p. 66; Taylor, 2001; Zhang & Gobster, 1998). The first theory of ethnicity states that ethnic groups opt for specific activities on the basis of "cultural traditions", habits and "group characteristics such as language or religion" (Allison, 1979, in Taylor, 2001, p. 537), often without bearing in mind the socio-economic factors that lie behind it (Zhang & Gobster, 1998). According to Taylor (2001), however, when analysing differences between individuals' and groups' perceptions and implementation of leisure, we should not treat ethnicity as a separate research variable but instead also account for underlying power structures. Likewise, Chen & Lu state that the design of our time use generally reflects larger "priorities and predilections, opportunities, and constraints" (Chen & Lu, 2009, p. 891). As such, the second thesis on marginality poses that

[97] The abbreviation JOP stands for 'Jeugdonderzoeksplatform' [Research Platform on Youth]. JOP was initiated in 2003 in Flanders and consists of an interdisciplinary and interuniversity collaboration between the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL), University of Ghent (UGent), and the Flemish University of Brussels (VUB). JOP has a dual mission: a systematic inventarisation, analysis and synthesis of existing research in Flanders, and the development of recurrent measurements (the JOP monitors) in order to create a better understanding of young people's living environments and the evolutions in it (JOP, 2007; Vettenburg, Elchardus, Put, & Pleysier, 2013b)

certain ethnic minority groups are restricted in their leisure participation due to socio-economic or class-based hardship and talks of participants' educational level, income as well as of processes of suppression, discrimination and repression. In turn, Zhang & Gobster (1998) point to two other concepts that can help explain – at least partly - specific leisure preferences and behaviour of ethnic minority groups. The first one is 'acculturation', a process by which the minority group adopts cultural characteristics of the dominant group. Secondly, Zhang & Gobster speak of 'assimilation' by which they refer to the phenomenon by which a minority group joins the society of the dominant group and participates in the latter's activities (Zhang & Gobster, 1998).

2. Music moms and tiger mothers?

Picture - Cover picture on one of the pupils' Facebook page.

2.1. Introduction

Various authors have pointed to Asian immigrant parents' emphasis on musicality and musical development with their children (Chua, 2011; Fleming, 2005; Wang, 2009). My initial encounter with the musical dimension of my respondents' lives took place during my very first meeting with a Chinese family in Antwerp. After I had I entered the sitting room, I

could notice the presence of a piano. During my visit, the teenage boy who I was about to interview and his younger brother were encouraged by their parents to gladden me with a classical piece of music. Throughout my ethnographic fieldwork, it would have been impossible to ignore the importance a musical education bore in the daily lives of my respondents. Of the twenty-six Chinese youngsters, twenty reported to have had at least some musical training in the past and twelve pupils were still enrolled in music classes at the time of the research. The piano was by all means the most popular instrument. This is keeping with the findings by other researchers on Chinese immigrants and musical education: Chinese parents tend to prefer the piano (and the violin) above other instruments because of its apparent difficulty and concomitant social standing. Terry's comprehensive response to the TAT1 card, which pictures the boy with the violin, clearly reflects this stance:

> Ah yes. This boy…he likes to play the drums but his dad and his mom make him play the violin. The boy considers it uncool to play the violin. Sometimes he secretly drums on bottles or other objects but when his parents enter the room, then of course he plays the violin again. Actually, he really has no talent to play the violin, but he is a very talented drummer. And, uhm, one day he was out with his friends and as usual they were drumming on different objects that they found in the street. Then, suddenly a man approaches him. The man is a teacher at an international music academy and also the frontman of a music band. Uhm…He asks the boy: would you like to come and rehearse with my band? The boy says: Yes, I'd love to, but my parents won't let me, because they want me to play the violin instead. Then, uhm, the gentleman replies: You know what, we'll figure something out to convince your parents. Some weeks later, the parents are invited to a concert. The concert starts off with somebody playing the drums behind a curtain. It's the boy, but his parents are not aware of it. His parents say: Wow, that drummer is really good! Who is he? The gentleman: Oh, that is a boy that I've selected to play in the band, but actually his parents don't allow him to play the drums because they prefer the violin. The parents think: but the violin is also a very nice instrument, isn't? Some minutes later, the drum act comes to an end. Then the boy takes his violin and starts playing behind the curtains. His parents: Oh, that's really out of tune. We don't like it. Who's that? Then, the curtain opens and the parents see their own son standing on the stage, with the drum and with the violin. They are shocked. Finally, the gentleman says to the parents: your son is a really talented drummer. You should not push him to play the violin. His parents understand and eventually allow him to become the drummer of the music band.

A minority of pupils in this study were found to either play the guitar, violin, cello or clarinet. In most cases it had been the parents' choice to enrol their children in music classes. All the above-described observations inevitably aroused a central question: what are the critical reasons for those parents to encourage their children into a musical training?

2.2. Musical education as a marker of social status

According to Wang (2009) and Ho (2011), classical western music is enmeshed with China's past and contemporary culture. Wang (2009) elucidates that statement by explaining that the history of western music in China and other East-Asian countries, such as Korea and Japan, dates back to the arrival of Christian missionaries and missionary schools. By the end of the nineteenth century nationalists started using western classical music as a means to nation building. At that time classical music was not considered a bourgeois affair, but instead formed an essential part of China's educational system. Apart from the intervening period of the Cultural Revolution in which Western music was considered taboo, western classical music has since then played an important role in China. Nowadays, as a result of the nation's booming economy and its growing number of middle and high class nationals, the general interest for classical music in China is even more expanding. The externalization of this increased interest can be observed in various ways. Not only has China become the largest exporting nation of violins, pianos and even classically trained musicians, in all major cities, modern and large concert halls and music academies are shooting up like mushrooms (Wang 2009). For now the staff at those academies still mostly consists of western trained Chinese musicians (Wang 2009).

Chen Long, one of the parent respondents who's a classical musician working at the Symphonic Orchestra of the Flemish Opera, was recently offered a job as a professor at the conservatory of Shanghai. According to him, China has outlined a deliberate policy of attracting highly educated and skilled overseas Chinese with alluring salaries and positions in a broad number of domains: technology, economy, science, and also culture. At least two of his acquaintances did indeed recently move back to China after they were offered a job as a professor at a Chinese university. One of them was a colleague musician from Paris, the other one, coincidentally, the father of my pupil respondent Lou.

> Chen Long: Many things have changed in China. China wants to become a big nation. Now that they have plenty financial resources, they are investing a lot in the universities of the major cities. They realize that there is a need for well-educated people for the nation to keep on growing economically. Therefore they are offering a lot of money and very good conditions to Chinese from all over the world and from very different sectors.
> Anthropologist: Do you mean that they are attracting Chinese who have studied abroad?

> Cheng Long: Yes, but also Chinese that have been residing and working overseas for a very long time. Like me! They offered me a very good position at the Shanghai Conservatory. You know, the current situation in China is sad: the government is confronted with a huge gap between rich and poor, and the biggest concern of many people has become money, more money and a bigger house. Moreover, this attitude is constantly being fostered by the national media that mainly reports on who's the richest man in the nation or who has entered the top 50 of most prosperous people. It is only since recently that this is slightly changing. They are now also trying to highlight the importance of a broader education and a cultural intellect.

In his remarks about the entanglement of China's growing economy, governmental policy and classical music, Chen Long strongly draws on discourses about international power relations. Clearly classical music in China currently fulfils many purposes: it is not only a cultural asset with inherent educational and developmental value, but also a political and economic good. Moreover, a third and important purpose should be added, one that should not be treated separately from the others: western classical music as marker of social status. According to musicologist Yayoi Everett "modernizing East Asian nations legitimized and embraced Western art music as a marker of status, along with their commodification of the Western lifestyle" (Wang, 2009, p. 885). Wang adds that for many Chinese immigrants "classical music (embodies) high cultural status and transnational cultural capital" and as such "Asian parents are participating in a long tradition of using music to pursue particular cultural, political, and pragmatic goals" (Wang 2009, p. 885).

3.3. "One is aroused by the songs, established by ritual and perfected by music"

In 2009, Wang wrote an article on *"Music moms",* thereby denoting "*competitive*", "*protective*", "*ambitious*", and "*self-sacrificing*" mothers who are extremely involved in the classical music training of their children and who, since the 1980s, in the US are being extremely associated with Asian mothers (Wang, 2009, p. 882). According to Wang, there are various reasons for this "racialization of the music mom'. One is the simply overwhelming presence of Asian students in prestigious music training programs in western countries (especially the US) and international music competitions. Another related element is the salient model minority discourse in the US that encloses various stereotype cultural attributes generally associated with Asian immigrant parents and students, as for example being extremely "hard-working", "obedient" and "disciplined" (Chang 2001; Cheryan &

Bodenhausen, 2000; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997; Song & Wang, 2004). In 2011, another book "*Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*" and an article in the Wall Street Journal "*Why Asian mothers are superior*", published by Amy Chua, a professor of Law at Yale Law School, became the subject of huge controversy in the US. For some time it was also a discussion topic in Flemish media[98] and popular websites on parenting[99].

In her book and article Amy Chua puts her own 'Chinese' parenting style against Western upbringing, and describes how in her own household two musical instruments, "the violin and the piano [became] the sites where battle lines [were] drawn" between herself and her two daughters in a "bitter clash of cultures" (Wang, 2011). What is most interesting about both authors, Wang and Chua, is their analysis of the complex ways in which Chinese immigrant parents (particularly mothers) define and redefine their identity through the musical education of their offspring. Although one story can be considered as a highly personal, and thus subjective account *from* a music mom and the other as a scientific analysis *of* Asian music moms in general, many similarities can be found in both writings. Strikingly, various elements of their citing I re-encountered in the narratives of my Chinese respondents in Flanders, albeit in a much less extreme form as I will demonstrate briefly in the following paragraphs. This might be explained by the fact that, as some have argued, Chua tends to confuse her upper-class identity with her Chinese identity and that her parenting style is not necessarily the result of the latter, in contrast to what she might believe (Lu, 2013).

By way of introduction, I recite a quotation from the principal of one of the Chinese community schools in Flanders, as it contains many of the elements equally present in the other respondents' articulations of the presumed differences between 'Chinese' and 'western' parenting styles and their expectations with regard to extracurricular activities.

> Anthropologist: So various Chinese mothers ask you for advice?
> Director of Chinese school: Yes, but they don't always listen (laughs). I know in the end they often do as they wish. Their children have to learn to play the piano and they have to go to the music academy. But then these parents don't like the fact that the first year of music training only implies music theory. To them that's insufficient. So then they start searching for additional private piano or violin teachers.
> Anthropologist: Do you believe Chinese parents expect a lot from their children?

[98] For example: Beel, V. (21/01/2011), Tijgermoeder versus knuffelmama. Chinees-Amerikaanse moeder stelt Westerse opvoeding ter discussie [Tiger mom versus hugging mom. Chinese-American mother call Western parenting into question]. *De Standaard*, p.18-19
[99] See for example: http://9maand.be/forum/archief/reactions/154832

Director: Yes, according to these parents their children have to excel in everything. Girls are put in ballet classes; after that it's art; but I believe their preference is still with music.

Anthropologist: Yes, with music? Why?

Director: Why? I don't know. Of course this is my opinion, but I guess they want to show off their offspring? I don't know (laughs). I actually shouldn't say this, it's not nice of me, although I really think it's like that. Children who can play very well always have to give a performance to entertain the family's visitors. After that comes the applause, 'Oh, bravo!' I am really not in favour of such events (laughs). By contrast, my children were equally enrolled in music classes, but I never forced them to perform in front of others. Oh, it's a typical Asian matter, not only Chinese, but also Japanese and so on.

Anthropologist: And do you know why those parents consider the musical education of their children so important?

Director: To start with, I believe they want to offer their children opportunities that they themselves have missed out on. Moreover, music classes are very expensive in Asia, at least in Hong Kong, and in Korea as well I believe. In comparison, in Belgium it's really cheap.

Anthropologist: Do you think that Chinese immigrant parents are influenced in their behaviour and expectations by the current developments in Asia?

Director: Yes, this is very much possible! Of course they see what is happening nowadays in China through television or by means of written media. Imagine that you never had the chance of doing all those things – music, arts, dancing – don't you think you would equally look upon those people in television as distinguished and gentle? Look, I am convinced that as a parent you need to send your children, especially little ones, to the art or music academy in view of their personal development. After all, important attitudes and values are transmitted through such training programs. However, whereas one child is good at drawing, another might excel in sports. You can't expect them to be good at everything! Chinese parents in Flanders are still more or less relaxed in that field; in Hong Kong the situation is much worse. I have nieces there who are forced to keep on learning new things – instruments, new languages – even in the course of summer vacation.

In the above-stated testimony the principal points to a central concern of many Chinese immigrant families, i.e. the transmission of certain attitudes and values onto their children by means of specific and multiple extracurricular activities, primarily music. In the minds of many Chinese parents, learning classical music and mastering an instrument, especially the piano and violin, requires discipline, perseverance, "diligence", "focus" and "self-sacrifice", all qualities perceived, not coincidentally, as prerequisite for attaining high academic achievement" (Wang, 2009). In traditional China music was not meant to amuse, but rather to enable self-control and to purify thoughts (Ho, 2011). Confucius said: "One is aroused by the songs, established by ritual and perfected by music" (Ho, 2011; p. 25). As was already demonstrated in the previous chapter on parental involvement these attitudes are not

believed to be innate. On the contrary, parents consider them as the result of what they themselves denote as a typically Chinese parental upbringing. As such, the Chinese parents' focus on musical training ought to be considered as part of the development of a much broader educational concern.

> Lou: When I was little, in primary school I mean, my mom forced me to take music classes. She was afraid that otherwise I would only play in my free time. She thought it would be better if I'd play some music or something. That's why she enrolled me in music classes.
> Anthropologist: And why do you think it is important for her that you participate in such activity?
> Lou: I don't know exactly, but she always tells me that important people, like great people, always have some kind of talent, like a musical talent or something. She says that those people are all able to play an instrument, like the piano for example.
> Anthropologist: And whom does she refer to when she speaks of 'great people'? Does she sometimes give you examples of that?
> Lou: Yes…pfff. Not scientists or anything. They don't have time for music, as they are always busy with sciences. But… uhm… actually I can't give you an example; maybe a famous actor? Many of them can play an instrument. My mom always says that playing music enriches your soul and simultaneously helps you think well. She says it makes you smart.

Ning's reply to the TAT1 Card (boy with the violin) reflects similar views.

> It's a child…He has a violin…but he looks so sad or is he sleeping? It doesn't matter. Maybe the thing in front of him is an instruction book with different lessons in it. The child doesn't want it. He doesn't want to learn to play the violin, so he leaves the violin laying on the table and he falls asleep. But his parents force him to play the violin anyway. They believe that it will provide the child an advantage over others. He will become better than the other children, more chances to find a good job later on. No, that's exaggerated. His parents just want him to become smarter than the others, better. Always better.

3.4. Musical education as a marker of ethnic identity

Although the transmission and development of attitudes and values appear central in many of the respondents' narratives, there is much more to their stories than the mere transfer of appraised qualities. I'd like to recall my earlier writings on the possible consequences of the existent model minority paradigm: the alleged 'exemplary' or 'model' behaviour of Chinese pupils in mainstream education is often considered – by teachers as well as Chinese parents and pupils themselves – as an central part of the Chinese identity, a perspective that

essentializes the cultural dimension of this behaviour. Here too, by sending their children to music classes, Chinese immigrant parents participate in a discursive (re-) construction of their ethnic identity in relation to a broader 'Chinese community' and simultaneously vis-à-vis the host country. This was pointed out by various elements in the principal's quotation. Being deprived in their childhood of educational opportunities, let alone extracurricular activities, many Chinese immigrant parents wish their children better prospects. Moreover, simultaneously witnessing relatives, acquaintances, and other Chinese, especially in their countries of origin, getting involved on a large scale in a variety of educational fields, cannot remain without a transnational overflow, and thus behavioural consequences within the Chinese communities overseas. In many East-Asian nations classical music has become an elite and prestigious form of transnational cultural capital, the echo of socioeconomic welfare and social prestige (Wang, 2009). In this respect we can also understand the apparent mechanism of social comparison present in various Chinese communities overseas (cf. Chua, 2011; Wang, 2009), including Flanders, as was pointed out by the Chinese principal and other respondents.

However, following the instrumental perspective on ethnicity (Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 2001; Turner & Reynolds, 2001), I argue that Chinese immigrants do not only define or redefine their ethnic identity in relation to the country of origin and overseas Chinese communities. As was also shown by Wang (2009) the ability to play a classical instrument equally influences immigrants' sense of social class and identity in the host country. 'Being Chinese' is then somehow placed in opposition to other minorities, and in some cases even vis-à-vis the 'Western Others'. Qualities as 'diligence' and 'self-sacrifice' become cultural traits that are set opposed to 'freedom' and 'lack of discipline'. The following quote from a Chinese boy living in Antwerp, Lamchoi, is illustrative of such positioning. It clearly mirrors the dynamic construction of an ethnic identity on the basis of boundaries or opposition to others by which a music education and perseverance in this domain are deployed as markers of cultural difference.

> Lamchoi: The Chinese want their children to be good at everything and from a minor age. Also they want their children to be able to do something with it later on. Western parents on the other hand might say: "Oh, maybe our child is still too small, let's keep those lessons for when he gets older and then he can choose an activity in accordance with his own interests".
> Anthropologist: And do you recognize any of those things with your own parents?

Lamchoi: Yes, with regard to Chinese school they act very Chinese, but not with for example music classes. I was never enrolled in a music academy. However, I do see that with the parents of some of my Chinese friends. They have to play the piano and they cannot give up, until they are grown up; then they stop. They want Chinese children to be better than others.

Remarkably many of the Chinese respondents in this research explicitly dissociate themselves from the ways in which, in their opinion, parents in East Asia currently deal with extracurricular activities. The majority of Chinese youth in Flanders, but parents and key figures from the community likewise, hold the opinion that the pressure this puts on individual children and on entire families is unreasonable. Equally striking is the way in which those youngsters concurrently draw a fault line between on the one hand the attitudes and demands of their own parents and on the other hand those of 'other Chinese in Flanders'.

Sophie: I talked about it with my dad a few times. Look, all those Chinese children who are obliged to succeed – I see it on Chinese television – they have to win the Olympic games, they have to play instruments. And every day all those hours of practice and training. I told him: "Dad, this is really out of place". He answered: "The reason for this is that in the past the Chinese have been needled by the western countries and by the Japanese, because they were weak. And now the government wants its people to be good at everything, no, to excel"! So, after he said that, I understood. However… still. My mother is sometimes harsh with me, but never that harsh for me to become unhappy. My parents want me to do well, but also set store by my happiness. Other Chinese parents are so directed at the success of their children, so as to be able to say to others: "Look what my son can do!" or "See what my daughter is able to manage!"

Anthropologist: Are you now talking about the Chinese in China and Hong Kong or about Chinese immigrants here in Belgium?

Sophie: Oh, you also encounter them here, Chinese with such mind-set. Personally, I don't have much contact with other Chinese youngsters, but my parents always tell me about this or that girl that can play an instrument or that is good at some kind of sport. You can even encounter a little bit of that in my own family: both my sisters play the piano, which they have had to learn from a minor age. I tried it as well, but I did not succeed.

Anthropologist: So, it was your parents' choice to send you to the music academy?

Sophie: Yes, but they did ask me if I wanted to. And then again: "Do you want to?" And again: "Do you want to play music?" So, for a while they did push me a little (laughs), but they knew that if I really had a hard time, I would stop going. They never push us so hard that it makes us unhappy.

The pupils in this study rarely consider their own parents as 'tiger parents'[100] in their attitude toward extracurricular activities. In most cases the choice for a specific activity had lied primarily with the parents, especially in terms of music and for other activities that had started in primary school, yet most youngsters had not experienced this as an unjust pressure being placed on them. Although various youngsters stated that every now and then they were very reluctant to go to class, they are nonetheless grateful for their parents' encouragement or even enforcement. What's more, some of them seem to have totally internalized their parents' expectations. This is in line with my earlier findings on the pupils' perceptions of parental demands regarding academic achievement. As will be shown by the narratives of Julie and Li-Na hereafter, those students openly disapproved of behaviours that contradicted parental expectations (cf. Qin, 2009).

> Shing: Yes, especially in the beginning I was really reluctant to go, because it was kind of boring. I didn't want to follow music classes. However now, I do realize that it was a good thing that I kept going.

> Julie: I am a person who likes to have after-school hobbies. I've always played the piano. I think it's good to participate in activities beyond school, in order to master more things in more domains. That's how many Chinese think, I believe, at least in Hong Kong.
> Sophie: Yes, they have to be able to play music, practice a sport, and know something about arts, a lot of things actually. Besides that, they have to perform very well in school.
> Julie: Yes, that's true, but I am not that extreme. (Laughs). However, I do expect my sisters to be engaged in some kind of extracurricular activity. For example my sister Sophie, she didn't have a hobby for a while. She didn't do anything after school. Then my mom and I stimulated her to take on her dancing classes again. We said to her: "Why don't you return to your dancing, you liked it, didn't you?"
> Anthropologist: And Sophie, did you?
> Sophie: Yes, I restarted my dancing classes (laughs), but also because I find it important myself.

> Anthropologist: Imagine that you arrive home tomorrow and you tell your parents: "Mom and dad, I wish to quit piano training, because I don't like it anymore".
> Li-Na: Oh, I've done that many times in the past (laughs), for one reason because I didn't like my piano teacher. They however didn't permit me to stop.
> Anthropologist: And how did they make that clear to you?
> Li-Na: Mainly by talking to me, not really like that mother in the story (cf. Footnote). Moreover, I

[100] I deliberately re-use Amy Chua's notion of the 'Tiger mom'. Shortly after her autobiographical account 'Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother' came out, I confronted the pupils in this research with some quotations from the book. I asked the pupils to react on what they had read and to identify elements that were recognizable to them, or on the contrary totally alien, or anything in between. Most of them recognized some aspects in their parents' behaviour, but were really abhorrent of what they considerd the 'extremities in the mother's actions and attitudes'. However, a minority also commented negatively on the behaviour of the youngest daughter who strongly reacted against her mother.

would never protest as her daughter did.

Interviewer: You wouldn't protest?

Li-Na: No! Not at all! That's such a spoiled attitude. You need to respect your parents. Moreover, I am glad that I didn't stop. I now really like playing the piano and I became much better in it as well. So, it's good that I persevered. I am grateful.

Anthropologist: Who was it exactly that stimulated you the most, your mother or father?

Li-Na: My dad. You know, they never had the chance to do such thing when they were young. So, in my opinion, as children we need to embrace the opportunities we get. My dad always says: "If I had had the chance to play the piano, I would have done it immediately".

Anthropologist: Ok. And do you, in any way, feel they put pressure on you?

Li-Na: No, to me it doesn't feel like that. We just have to keep practicing.

The Chinese pupils in this research who prematurely broke off their musical training mostly indicated that this was because of a general disinterest, a perceived lack of talent or preference for other activities. All of them did so either in the course of primary education or – and foremost – during adolescence. This accords with the general findings for Flanders: participation in structural organisations increases as children move through elementary school, but starts to decline from the age of twelve (Vanhoutte, 2007). Although it was never without resistance on the parents' side when the Chinese pupils decided to stop, it did not involve a psychological warfare or lasting conflict either. Most parents allowed for a certain degree of agency and independence with their children and as such eventually reconciled with their children's choice. Nonetheless, many narratives clearly indicate that not taking part in any organized after-school activity was considered by most Chinese parents as fundamentally wrong.

Sophie: After I gave up music, my mother said to me: "Ok Sophie, if you don't want to play music, that's fine, but you cannot do nothing! And so she forced me to take dancing classes."

Lou: I quit music classes after two years.

Anthropologist: And did your mother easily except that?

Lou: Hmm, no, it was actually a long battle, until she eventually reconciled and obliged me to do something else. I chose soccer.

Anthropologist: Was she ok with that choice?

Lou: No, she didn't really like it then, but my dad was ok with it, so…

An important reason for Chinese parents to stimulate their children to participate in extracurricular activities is their wish to encourage their children to actively socialize with

others and to improve children's interpersonal skills. This resonates with the recent findings of Lau-Clayton (2014) in the UK. Sophie's mother, for instance, clearly stated she wanted her daughter to engage in dancing or music classes in order for her to learn how to interact with others beyond the safe home environment. For the same reasons she also stimulated Sophie to take on a summer job.

> Mother of Sophie: You know, Sophie is not very active. She doesn't go out very often. She prefers to stay at home. And you see, during the holidays there's nothing to do. What a waste of time! I don't like that! I want them to learn how to work and I also want them to learn how to face other people. Look, when Julie was small, not very small, twelve or thirteen years old, she was scared to talk to strangers. I said: "Ok, I don't want you to be extremely social, but at least you should not be so scared of things or other people. You should have more self-confidence." I have seen children who only stay at home, who don't have social life. When they grow up it is very difficult for them to get into contact with other people. And I think these children lose a lot of changes in life. That is also why I urge my children to go to dancing classes or music classes.

An important question nevertheless remains: Why do these parents – also second-generation Chinese parents – keep investing in the construction of a certain identity, a 'musical identity' as a significant marker of social status, if many of them have to give it up not so long after? The reasons for that are not unambiguous. As was demonstrated before, the majority of parents only adjust their ambitions after they have found, or accepted, another satisfying after-school activity for their child, which indicates that many of them still consider extra-curricular activities imperative to a good education or upbringing of their children. No differences could be found in this field between lower and higher educated parents, nor on the basis of gender or pupils' educational track. High educated parents, however, did seem to be slightly less pliable with regard to giving in to their child's wish. Especially parents who had already gained such form of cultural capital before the time of migration were keen on transmitting it to their offspring.

Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to attribute the seemingly loose hopes of Chinese parents in Flanders with regard to their children's musical training as a mere expression of assimilation to Western parenting styles. As I have commented before, the position of the 'Chinese community' in Flanders bears only limited resemblance to 'the one' in the United States that constitutes the subject of Wang's and Chua's reflections. In Flanders, the second generation is well embedded in mainstream Flemish society. At the same time they

are not totally exempted from discriminatory factors, or from the model minority myth. As such, it should not come as a surprise that Chinese parents in Flanders, also second generation, wish to preserve or re-install a 'Chinese identity' in the face of 'Others' - i.e. Flemish society, other minority groups in Flanders and the broader transnational Chinese community - through a classical musical training for their children. The most important reason for these parents not to persist in their 'musical demands' is that they still consider the regular educational system as the major means to general success. As long as their children perform well in mainstream education and participate in another perceived 'significant' after-school activity, all seems to be well. A second major difference with the United States has to do with the nature of the mainstream education system. In the U.S. many Chinese parents sent their children to Chinese schools of music as a way to acquire extra-curricular credit for their child's college admission package (Lu, 2013). Lu (2013) explains that the American education system is characterised by high competition levels. As such, Chinese American families often see a music-education as a long-term strategy for educational success.

The exact impact of participation in music education on Chinese pupils' general academic performance could not be measured within the scope of this study. The focus of this research has been not been with the question whether the Chinese pupils' school results and performances benefited from their music education or not. Based on a clear observation of the Chinese respondents' preference for music classes in the design of the children's free time, I have mainly focussed on the motives, perceptions, dreams and fears underlying this behaviour, and on its link with the development of a specific identity by means of music. Moreover, according to Hodges' and O'Connell's analysis of an extensive body of literature (2005), it is simply impossible to give a definitive statement on the precise effect of music training on academic achievement. For example, where Duke, Flower, and Wolfe (1997) "found that piano performance ability was unrelated to academic achievement", Cheek (1999) asserted that keyboard lessons generated significantly higher mathematic scores with eight-grade students (Hodges & O'Connell, 2005). As a result of the unclear and contradictory nature of most findings, Hodges & O'Connell (2005) conclude with the suggestion that "*some* music experiences have a positive impact on academic performance under *certain* circumstances", which is of course a very noncommittal statement. Although most Chinese parents in this research believe that a thorough musical training has significant tail ends in their children's general educational development, it was not possible to prove or to repudiate a significant correlation between both elements on the basis of the available ethnographic

data. The study shows that some youngsters spend two to four evenings per week on music classes and additional exercise at home. Most, however, assert that this has had no negative consequences for their study results. When this danger arises, youngsters sometimes decide to put an end to their musical training or they are stimulated by their parents to do so.

> Yulian: My mom regards our music classes as a hobby; at least she wants us to give precedence to our schoolwork. So sometimes, when I have too many tasks for school, I'd skip a music class.
> Anthropologist: You said you sometimes had conflicts with your parents. What are they mostly about?
> Lucas Lee: I think, mostly about me playing the piano. It was my choice to go to the music academy.
> Anthropologist: And your parents do not agree with it?
> Lucas Lee: Uhm... My parents mostly consider it a distraction. Yes, they want me to concentrate fully on my studies. My parents, in fact my entire family, is not really into music or the piano. They show little interest in it. They are primarily involved in my studies.
> Anthropologist: Would they prefer you to stop?
> Lucas Lee: Yes.
> Anthropologist: And will you?
> Lucas Lee: No, I don't think so, though it always will remain a hobby.

Only one boy, Chen Gao, whose father is a professional musician, repeatedly told me that his involvement with music was having a negative impact on his school results, a fact equally brought up on numerous occasions by his parents. His situation can be considered as an example of what Bohnert and her colleagues (2010) have denoted as "the overscheduling hypothesis", i.e. there exists a "threshold level of participation" from which arises a negative impact on academic achievement. Chen Gao was following cello classes during five hours a week (at the music academy and with a private teacher) and also played in the orchestra of his school. All of this in addition to many hours of practice, rehearsal and occasional preparation for music contests left him with little time for schoolwork and study. Although his parents suggested he would refrain from his chamber music classes, Chen Gao does rather not. He really seems to enjoy playing the cello, and as such finds himself confronted with a very difficult question regarding his professional future.

> Father Chen Gao: Chen Gao has a real talent for music. However music is hard work and you need to give it a lot of your time in order to master it.
> Chen Gao: Yes, and I don't always know how to combine it with my work for school. For example on Thursday, I participate in the school's orchestra from 7 pm to 9 pm. Most of the times, by 7 pm I have studied only half of what I am supposed to study that night. Then, at 9.30pm I have to resume the thread

of where I left, only is my mind full of music then. So, it's really hard to concentrate sometimes. And concentrating in general is already a problem for me. So now I don't know what to do about my future.
Anthropologist: What do you mean? Do you mean you have given up your dream to become a doctor?
Chen Gao: Well… since I have so much trouble concentrating, I have mitigated my expectations a little bit. So I started thinking I could maybe choose for my hobby and go to the conservatory instead. However when I decide to do so, I really need to invest most of my time in my cello training and thus ignore my regular school career even more. That's a hard choice to make.

3. Participation in ethnic family business

3.1. Introduction

Over half of the Chinese pupils in this study were frequently urged by their parents to assist in the family's ethnic business[101], especially during weekends or school holidays. This confirms the ethnographic findings of Ching Lin Pang (2003b) and CGKR (2005) on the degree of child labour in Chinese family businesses in Flanders, and is also in line with the findings of other scholars on Chinese communities elsewhere in Europe (Lau-Clayton, 2014; Parker, 1995; Rijkschroeff, 1998; Song, 1997). Miao Heng Shih of the 'Belgium Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple Antwerp' puts it as follows: "Most of the times the second generation will *willingly* help their parents in their businesses, particularly on Saturday and Sunday".

In general terms, for many of the pupil respondents the family enterprise comprised an essential part of their daily lives. They had literally grown up *in* it. During the time of the research eight pupils were residing in a house or apartment situated above the shop or restaurant and in various cases there were no clear-cut boundaries between living and work area. The restaurants' main cooking area, for example, equally served as the household's kitchen. Moreover, parents with smaller children who worked at night sometimes relied on relatives or a Chinese nanny for childcare, though in many cases they kept their children close, thus *within* the business-site. Other families lived separated from their businesses. However, also their children did not go straight home after school. Prior to going home, these children first spent a few hours in the family's enterprise. There they ate, made homework,

[101] These ethnic businesses mainly consisted of Chinese restaurants or take-aways (10 families, 13 pupils). Two families (3 pupils) were store-owners. One family was the owner of two masage salons (1 pupil). One mother owned a 'Chinese café' (1 pupil). Two fathers did not own a business, but worked in the restaurant of Chinese acquaintances.

prepared for tests and helped their parents with food orders. Having their children close presented a way for parents to create more opportunities to spend time with their offspring and to monitor their children's after-school time use despite work obligations.

3.2. Chinese ethnic businesses and familialism

In the general literature on Chinese ethnic businesses and the factors conducive to their worldwide success, one paramount theme can be found, namely that of "utilitarianistic familism*" (jia)* or the ideological and social importance of family kinship and lineage ties as an organizing principle (Pang 2002, 2003b; Song, 1997). Traditionally, however, Chinese culture has been related to notions of 'collectivism', 'family solidarity' (Fuligni, 2002) and 'strong family structure' (Song, 1997). Fuligni (2002) accordingly states that as a result of the interdependent orientation within the Chinese household, Chinese families tend to stress Confucian principles, such as filial piety, family support and assistance when socializing their children. According to the same author, and others, these Chinese patterns of socialization remain strong even among Chinese immigrant communities in the West (Fuligni, 2002; Ho, 1989, in Song 1997). It has equally been stated that the deployment of family members, also children, within the Chinese ethnic enterprise should be seen as an important form a social capital. According to Pang (2002) this is not an isolated Chinese phenomenon, as in many 'ethnic' businesses family labour is considered an important resource. Family members, and children in particular, make up a central part of the family's "strategy to compensate for the disadvantaged labour market status of [the] immigrant family [head]" (Glenn, 1983, in Song, 1997, p. 691). As such, kinship is considered a resource for economic development. Indeed, they often work for lower wages and provide a more stable workforce (Song, 1997). Moreover, family members are important because they can be trusted (Wong, 1998). However, according to Song (1997), many scholars have showed a too limited view on the role of family in ethnic businesses by focusing solely on their instrumental value. In addition they have neglected or obscured the specific role of children's labour participation in such businesses. She therefore pleads for a more broader analysis that takes into account the relationship of children's labour to the immigrant family's experiences of migration, and the various opportunities and constraints this encloses, for example as a result of prevailing racism and prejudice. In addition, Pang (2002) notes that family labour by children is not without consequences. The general practice of children "helping out" takes away much time

and energy of the youngsters from doing schoolwork and for developing a social life (Pang 2003b, p. 89). According to her, many of the intermediate generation Chinese youngsters in Flanders did indeed drop out of school, in particular the elder siblings within the nuclear family (Pang, 2002) as a result of the implicit "family work contract" (Song, 1997). She therefore rightfully questions how the current second-generation Chinese youngsters view themselves and their Chineseness vis-à-vis their native counterparts and whether they are keen on continuing the family's enterprise.

Many of the youngsters in this research started 'helping out' their parents in the family business from a relative young age. As was the case for the respondents in Song's study of 'Chinese child labour' in the UK (1997), parental expectations in this regard were often 'implicit' and 'unquestioned' as children gradually grew up *with* and *in* the family's business. In the course of this study the respondents nevertheless reported various reasons for why children and youngsters were called in for assistance in due time. The most obvious ground for some parents was that they could not afford or considered it unnecessary to appoint an additional external employee. As a result, children were asked to step in, particularly on busy moments, as was for example pronounced in the narratives of Sophie and Meiying.

> Sophie: On regular weekdays I come home after school, change my clothes, and then I start to study. Sometimes, on busy days I have to help my parents in the take-away. At times, my dad is really tired because he has a second job in the construction industry. On such moments we let him rest a little and we – my sister or I - assist my mother with the food orders. Most of the times my parents call us from downstairs: "Please, come down for a second to help us!" Also when I hear the phone or doorbell ring many times, then I know it is getting busy and I already hurry down myself. On such moments I realize that my parents are too occupied to be even able to call me.

> Anthropologist: Are you involved in any other activities after school?
> Meiying: I go to the Chinese school once a week. On busy moments I have to help my parents in the take-away, but only in the weekends, so on Friday evening after school, and on Saturday or Sunday.
> Anthropologist: What exactly do you have to do then?
> Meiying: Oh, I have to help them behind the counter with the food orders. I don't cook.
> Anthropologist: And how long does it take on an average weekend-day?
> Meiying: Mostly an hour or two.

Two other often stated reasons for parents to involve their children in the family business are a postulated transmission of certain values on the one hand, and training of

specific skills and attitudes on the other hand. The parents of Cheng-Du and Shing used to employ a Moroccan female student on Sundays. When the girl resigned, the parents decided to deploy their two sons by turns to substitute for her. The two boys were given the task of packing the food orders and worked on average two to three hours each Sunday. In the following quote, the mother goes more deeply into the motives behind her actions.

> They have to do it, because I feel I need to let them know and also show them that money doesn't grow on trees. I have to teach them that, otherwise they would never be able to understand our work. They would never understand how hard we actually work. So, I teach them everything about the operations in the kitchen and every other task involved. They are almost sixteen now. When I compare… I know I shouldn't really compare both situations, but when my husband and I were thirteen years old, we already had to work very hard.

The sisters Yulian and Sam also regularly needed to assist their parents in one of their Chinese retail shops. Sometimes, when I called them on the weekend to plan for an appointment, they were indeed busy working. In addition, upon their request one of the in-depth interviews I conducted with them took place in the office above the shop after their weekend shift. As her main task, Yulian was asked to seat herself behind the cash desk and serve the customers, while Sam was given responsibility to replenish stocks and to keep a general eye on things. On different occasions, Yulian told me she didn't like the tasks that she was put up with. Eventually, not Yulian herself but Sam reflected on the reasons for why her sister felt reluctant to work in her parents' business. Throughout her account she also shed a light on her parents' motivational grounds.

> Sam: My sister doesn't have many opinions of her own. Every time somebody asks her a question, she's like: "Uhm, I don't know?" She's a true scaredy-cat. My parents often say to her: "Look Yulian, in your future professional career you will have to be able to give your opinion on things. Imagine that you become the manager of this shop. When your employees make mistakes, then you will need to be able to point that out to them." For now, my sister is afraid to say anything. Everybody in the family believes she significantly lacks self-confidence. Even my little sister – she's only seven – teases Yulian all the time. Can you imagine?
>
> (…)
>
> Anthropologist: Yulian told me she often has to serve customers in your parents' shop. How is she doing there?
>
> Sam: Yes, she's responsible for the cash desk, but she actually lacks confidence for the job. She's always afraid to make mistakes, so that's why she often states she's doesn't like or want to do the job. My parents however always tell her to keep trying. "Learning through practice", they always say.

In two other families, the parents equally referred to their wish to stimulate the development of their daughters' social skills by forcing them to serve customers in the family's business. The mother of Sophie and Julia pronounced it as follows:

> "I want her to learn how to deal with different people. We get all kinds of customers in the take-away. She needs to know how to remain self-secure and polite at the same time, without sacrificing herself in front of rude or demanding customers".

In two of the above-stated cases, parents give utterance to feelings of fear with regard to their child's ability to deal with 'others', particularly in the light of a future professional context. Consequently, they want to help their daughters constitute a self-secure and self-respecting identity, and as such arm them against potential difficulties in their later career. Within this sample, many of the Chinese parents seemed keen for their children to develop important social skills and to become more independent, self-reliant and responsible by requesting them to participate in the family's business. These findings are at odds with most existing literature which generally depicts Chinese parents simply as authoritarian and restrictive towards children's autonomy and individuality (Lau-Clayton, 2014). In fact, the strategies applied here by the Chinese families point to a co-existence of both Chinese collectivist and Western individualist orientations (Lau-Clayton, 2014). Not only are children trained to bear responsibility for the family, but also to become more independent.

A minority of pupils who worked in their family's businesses received pocket money in return. The majority, however, worked at irregular intervals and received nothing. In the same context pupils often made a distinction between 'working' and 'helping out' (Song, 1997). Both were conceived as a central part of the relationship between family members, which contrasts with Song's research (1997) in which respondents mainly applied the notion of 'work' in relation to labour that took place beyond the family context. Overall, within the current sample, the Chinese pupils considered it quite normal for children to help their parents without having to be reimbursed. It was thought of as a self-evident sign of respect and gratitude vis-à-vis one's parents. As was also argued by Song (1997) with regard to Chinese 'child labourers' in Britain, in their expression of these beliefs, those youngsters upheld a collective norm, which gave them "a sense of belonging to a Chinese community". As such, it is not surprising that various youngsters, in their comments on Chinese children's role in

family businesses, concomitantly distinguish between what they designate as a 'Chinese' and a 'Flemish' upbringing. In relation to that, various pupils seemed to believe that Westerners generally disapproved of their work in their parents' business, which at times generated in a kind of "alienation effect".

> Amber: Belgians are brought up differently from Chinese, in my opinion anyway. Chinese children always have to work. We didn't have to work when we were little, but now we do, as do our cousins. Probably others consider that weird, for example in terms of arranging appointments. Chinese youngsters always have to be home by a certain hour in order to work. (Laughs)

As a result, some of these youngsters took up a defensive position. They felt a need to justify their parents' expectations, and by extension their own stance, or even "an entire way of life" (Song, 1997), in which the family's business and the household constitute two parts of one and the same entity. Their narratives reveal a need to fight against prejudice present in the dominant society. However, by doing so, they themselves equally gave evidence of stereotyping.

> Sophie: Most of the Chinese youngsters have to help their parents in their restaurant.
> Julie: Yes, that's true!
> Sophie: It is generally expected of children. But, that's normal!
> Julie: Yes, it is perhaps a bit of a cultural difference, I mean, it to be normal for children to help their parents.
> Sophie: Yes, and without receiving money for it. In my opinion, that's how it should be. You know that I work in a bakery store every Sunday morning. Do you know how people react to that?
> Anthropologist: I have no idea. Tell me.
> Sophie: "Wow, you must earn a lot of money hey, since you work in the bakery store and at home as well." When I reply that at home I don't get a penny, they find that so weird! In contrast, to me that's normal. That's where our opinions collide. I think that helping our parents is the least we can do. Others really don't understand. "Listen", I ask them, "when you go grocery shopping for your mom, do you get paid to do that?" "Oh, yes", they say. Then I'm like: "What??"
> Anthropologist: And who are you talking of? Are they friends of yours?
> Sophie: Yes. Well, actually it's someone who also works at the bakery store, a Belgian… uhm…a Belgium-girl… a girl. Every time she does something for her parents, she receives money for it. Is that the case with all of you? (Laughs)
> Anthropologist: That was not the case when I grew up, at least not in my family.
> Sophie: Oh, ok!

> Julie: Haha. Yes, I share Sophie's opinion. You actually live with your parents. They pay for your education and they make your food. I don't think you can start calculating everything: "Ok, I worked for so many hours, so I should get that amount of money". No, that's really out of place!
> Sophie: Yes, really! My parents always taught me that this is totally disrespectful. Imagine what we would have to pay them in return for our food, clothes…

Rijkschroeff (1998) refers to the notion of 'sacrifice' and states that the commitment of children in the family's business is primarily attributable to the importance of the family bond. The effort of 'helping out' by the youngsters is considered as 'the normal thing to do'. Values as loyalty, responsibility and family pride play in important role in this case. The notion of filial piety should linked here with yet another important Confucian principle: namely that of *renqing*. Liu (2008, p. 70) explains: "in a Chinese context, if someone offers a gift or provides a service to a recipient, the recipient is supposed to owe the donor a *renqing*… this can be either a measurable thing or a social deed of quality that is hard to repay." However, notwithstanding the perceived casualness and normative stance of 'child labour' in family businesses in pupils' narratives, the same pupils simultaneously exhibited ambivalence and feelings of disinclination. A part of the ambivalence was related to the topic of leisure and reflected youngsters' dissatisfaction with their deprivation of leisure time and diminished possibilities to engage in activities with non-Chinese peers outside the home environment. This was particularly the case as children grew older.

Meying, for example, notes: "I don't really like having to work on the weekend; I would rather go out with friends on those days". This finding is in line with other studies that have observed a negative correlation between satisfaction with leisure time and weekly work intensity (Lau-Clayton, 2014; Weller et al 2003). Rijkschroeff (1998) writes in this regard that in several Chinese families a tension exists: parents expect their children to acquire a good position in the host society through a good education, but on the other hand expect their offspring to help out in the family business, which greatly restricts their free time and their involvement in the host society. Although this was also the case for many youngsters in this research, they however judged mild about it.

Another reported vexation, one that is central to this dissertation, was centred on education. Some pupil respondents made mention of the significant difficulties they encountered in reconciling between the familial working obligations on the one hand and their responsibilities towards school on the other hand. They felt they were being deprived of the

time that they should normally be spending on school tasks and study. Sophie, who already had to repeat a school year twice and who was still struggling to keep abreast of her classmates, describes her experiences with combining school and family duties as follows:

> Most of the times when my mother calls me to assist in the take-away, she also says: "take your books with you so that you can study", which I do then. On such moments, I usually try to revise some of the subject matters and avoid things that require a lot of concentration, like mathematics for example. The repetition of a text or some vocabulary, yes that I can do. However, sometimes the two things clash. You know, it always takes me a very long time to get concentrated, and then when I'm finally focussed, my mother calls out: "Sophie, come down for a second, because your father and I can no longer handle it by ourselves". After that, the whole process starts again. My mother's reaction on that is: "Come on, Sophie, you only had to help for 20 minutes or so". She doesn't understand the difficulties I have to find my concentration.

I asked Sophie whether she had talked to her mother about it. She said:

> Yes, but my mother replied: "There's nothing really I can do about it. You will have to learn to plan things". And you know, in the end I'm always able to finish my school assignments, though often very late at night.

In other cases students' accounts demonstrated that parents guarded against overburdening their children. Lamchoi explained that in case he had a lot of school assignments or studying to do, his parents left him be. On such moments he stayed at home and did not go to his parents' restaurant. Also Terry reported it to be rather exceptional for her parents to call her down for help. She commented: "They only do that when it's really busy; they would never disturb me in my studies if it wasn't necessary". Moreover, in contradiction to what you might conclude from Sophie's story and from many scholarly accounts on Chinese parental control and authority, within my group of respondents such areas of tension often lead to explicit discussions and negotiations within the household. This again proves that we must take Chinese youngsters' agency into account, and not look upon them as mere 'passive puppets on a Chinese parental string'.

One of the focal schools in this research with a large Chinese student population nonetheless considered the situation problematic for some of her pupils. Children's work in their parents' business was tended to be viewed by them in a predominantly negative and disapproving light, as like various scholars in the past who have related the phenomenon to

exploitation (Song 1997). In the experience of the school staff concerned here, Chinese parents usually set high expectations with regard to their children's school results, but did not always provide for the appropriate time and space to meet these expectations. Talking to the student alone does usually not resolve the problem, the teachers state. As a result, the teachers felt a need at times to intervene, and call the child's parents to account on parents' evenings. *If* the parents follow the school's advice, and thus reduce the child's time spent on labour in the family business, it was believed to result in a better educational performance. One of the teachers reported to me in detail, and in a quite persuasive way, on a Chinese girl in fifth grade (age 17) who failed her final exams due to extensive responsibilities within the family's business. In the words of the teacher: "From the moment the school was out, she had to *run* to her parents' restaurant and answer *all* the incoming phone calls. Therefore she could *only* start studying at 10pm". According to the same teacher the parents did not allow the pupil to repeat the year, despite her final result of 54%. That's when the school stepped in. "We talked to the parents in a very clear-cut way: 'you *must* give your child more time to study, which is *not* by asking her to be present in the restaurant all night in order to answer the phone'. So now that she is given more space, she obtained a very high mark: 81%. I have really noticed a difference in her. She's flourishing! Yes, she's doing well now." Much to my regret as a researcher I was unable to go more deeply into the matter with the student herself. She was not given permission by her parents to participate in the research, at least so she told me. Be that as it is, even before the incident I could feel a strong sense of reluctance from the pupil's side to the central topic of my research: Chinese family strategies with regard to education. Whether this reluctance was caused by a sensed dissension between the home and the school context, or/and an expression of resistance against the school – with whom I unwillingly happened to be identified in the beginning – it was clear that she was uncomfortable with my request.

In general most Chinese pupils in this research reported that they were able to maintain their grades despite their substantial involvement in the family's business. When the danger arose of working having a negative impact on school results, most young people seemed to be able to negotiate with their parents on a more favourable balance between time for school and time for work. Further, one student straightforwardly admitted to have used the 'child-labour-paradigm' vis-à-vis her teachers as an excuse for bad school grades. Enlai, the father of Mei-Lan made mention of a similar incident with his daughter, her teachers and members of the CLB.

Enlai: My youngest daughter Amber, she doesn't do it, but Mei-Lan, oh, she knows the game!

Anthropologist: Which game are you talking about?

Enlai: The game of not telling the truth to her teachers about the business and about her mother. Mei-Lan just wants people's attention.

Anthropologist: And what did she tell her teachers?

Enlai: For example, when we were still living in Kortrijk, her teachers told us: "Mei-Lan has difficulties in keeping up with the school's subject matter. She will have to repeat the year or change tracks". Some while after that, the school sent someone from the CLB to our house. She talked with Mei-Lan in Flemish. I could understand a little bit of what was being said, although I acted as if I could not. Mei-Lan told the lady that she was having a hard time at school because she had to help a lot in the restaurant. After the lady had gone, I asked Mei-Lan: "What do you mean: you need to assist a lot in the restaurant?" "To pick up the phone", she said. "And how often do you have to pick up the phone?" "Two times." "Two times in one day or two times in the entire year?" "Two times per year." Ok, that says enough, doesn't it? She really doesn't have to help very often. She only tried to blame the family's business for her bad school performance. And you know, when a child holds up such statements, of course the teacher will believe it, especially when the parents are absent.

Anthropologist: What happened afterwards?

Mei-Lan: I talked to her teachers and that was enough. They believed me.

4. Summary

In this chapter an overview was given of youngsters' afterschool time use and its complex interactions with ethnicity and socieducational integration. Several studies in Flanders have shown that ethnic minorities participate less in extracurricular activities and that this has a potential negative influence on their general involvement and wellbeing in Flemish society. The Chinese pupils in this study, however, took part in at least one recurrent form of outdoor leisure activity and parents actively engaged in the search for meaningful activities and supervision of after-school activities.

In the first section, I have turned to the respondents' emphasis on a musical education, which appeared a familial focus that was impossible to ignore in the empirical data. Generally it had been the parents' choice to enrol their children in music classes. Different reasons underpinned their choice. First of all, classical music is enmeshed with China's past and contemporary culture. Since the end of the 19th century, it has formed an essential part of the Chinese education. Moreover, since the booming of the Chinese economy, the general interest

for western classical music has only grown. In China and the broader Chinese diaspora, it is generally seen as a cultural asset with educational, developmental, political, and economic value. Being able to play a classical music instrument, preferably the piano or violin, is considered a form of transnational cultural capital, and as such also a marker of social status. Similarly, the Chinese parents in this generally viewed a musical training as supportive to their children's general personal development from the belief that important attitudes and values are transmitted through a musical training. Mastering a classical instrument requires discipline, perseverance, diligence, self-control, and other innate qualities that are also perceived prerequisite for attaining high academic achievement. As such, the focus with Chinese parents on music education should be considered as part of a much broader educational concern. Generally speaking, most respondents in this study considered extra-curricular activities imperative to a good education or upbringing of children. Not taking part in any organized after-school activity was considered negative. Parents wanted their children to spend their time well and to use extracurricular activities to actively socialize with others and to improve their interpersonal skills. Only when participation in extracurricular activities was having a negative influence on school results as a result of surpassing the 'threshold level of participation', then parents allowed children to withdraw from certain activities. After all, success in mainstream education was still regarded as the main means to success. Not many differences could be found in this field between lower and higher educated parents, nor on the basis of gender or pupils' educational track.

Apart from the transfer of skills and values, by times a musical education was also used as a marker of ethnic identity. It was found that in relation to music education, respondents participated in a discursive (re-) construction of their ethnic identity in relation to the home country, the broader diaspora, and the dominant society in Flanders. The above-described qualities and values were presented as cultural traits and set opposed to 'freedom' and 'lack of discipline', which were believed to be more common in Western society. This mirrors the dynamic construction of ethnic boundaries by which a music education and perseverance in this domain were deployed as markers of cultural difference. At the same time, however, parents clearly dissociated themselves from the so-called 'music moms' or 'tiger parents' in the country of origin and diaspora, who currently put a lot of pressure on youngsters to excel in all kinds of extracurricular activities. Likewise, youngsters did not feel that their parents were placing an unjust pressure on them. To some part this can be explained by the internalization with children of parental expectations and from a belief that they needed

to embrace the opportunities they were receiving. Even so, various youngsters were found to eventually put and end to their musical training, especially during adolescence. As most parents allowed for a certain degree of agency and independence with their children, most of them eventually reconciled with their children's choice.

In the second part of this chapter, attention was paid to the Chinese youngsters' participation in family's ethnic businesses. After all, nearly half of the youngsters were found to spend considerable after-school time in these businesses. In many families an implicit 'family work contract' existed, by which children were asked to assist their parents in their work. To some extent, children's labour had instrumental and economic value and was represented a kind of social capital. However, parents also postulated involving children in the family business as an important means to transmit specific values, skills and attitudes to their children in view of their future professional development. These included: an increased understanding of the value of money and hard work, responsibility for the family, general social skills, autonomy and self-confidence. Moreover, having their children close also presented a way for parents to create more opportunities to spend time with their offspring and to monitor their children's after-school time use despite work obligations. In most cases, children considered working in the families' business without receiving a reimbursement a self-evident sign of respect and gratitude towards their parents. The notion of filial piety should be connected here with yet another important Confucian principle: namely that of *renqing*. However, other youngsters rather exhibited ambivalence and feelings of disinclination regarding the 'family work contract', as it deprived them from spending time with peers outside the home. Moreover, although various parents guarded against overburdening their children, it also deprived youngsters from time to study and do homework. Particularly teachers have expressed their concern or even overtly negative views about this phenomenon. However, in contradiction to what is commonly believed, also amongst teachers, within the Chinese households in this study, such areas of tension often lead to explicit discussions and negotiations between parents and youngsters. This again proves that we must take Chinese youngsters' agency into account, and not look upon them as mere 'passive puppets on a Chinese parental string'. These findings are at odds with the common depiction of Chinese parents as authoritarian and restrictive towards children's autonomy and individuality. In fact, the strategies applied here by the Chinese families point to a co-existence of both Chinese collectivist and Western individualist orientations. Not only

are children trained to bear responsibility for the family, but also to become more independent.

As stated earlier in chapter 6, another important global phenomenon with respect to after-school time use, is the occurance of Chinese heritage schools as a community service within the Chinese diaspora (Sun, 2014; Yang, 1999). Given the significance of these kinds of schools in the discussion on Chinese family strategies centred on education, the next chapter will be devoted entirely to Chinese heritage education.

Chapter 10

Chinese community schooling in Quebec and Flanders

From a comparative perspective, this last chapter sheds light on the role of Chinese community schools in the educational trajectory of Chinese youngsters and in the social positioning of Chinese families in Flanders and Quebec. It explores processes of identity construction by analysing the extent to and the ways in which respondents rely upon these institutional spaces for intergenerational continuity and for exchanging cultural resources and knowledge with in-group members. This last part of the doctoral research has also inspired me to write two joint articles with fellow researchers on Chinese community schooling. In 2012, Ming Sun and I published a first article in *Diversité Urbaine* titled "Comparing Supplementary Ethnic Schools and the Academic Achievement of Chinese Immigrant Students in Quebec and Flanders" (Sun & Braeye, 2012). A second jointly written text, "Poolse en Chinese scholen: bruggen bouwen tussen thuis en school"[102], was a book chapter published in 2014 written by Edith Piqueray, Noel Clycq, Christiane Timmerman and myself (Piqueray, Braeye, Clycq, & Timmerman, 2014).

1. Introduction

During field observations and the analysis of Chinese family strategies for education, it would have been impossible to ignore the role of Chinese community schooling for the Chinese families in Flanders. To most of the youngsters involved in this study, going to the Chinese school has been a fundamental part of growing up. At the onset of the inquiry ten out of twenty-six Chinese youngsters were enrolled in one. Of those who were not, eleven had been in the past. The presence of community schools is apparent with many different immigrant groups in western countries (Li, 2006; Lytra, 2012). In the global Chinese diaspora alike they are a widespread phenomenon touching the lives of numerous Chinese immigrant families.

A cross-cultural browsing through international literature indicates significant disparities between Chinese community schools in different regional contexts. They are also

[102] English translation of the title: "Polish and Chinese schools: bridging the gap between school and home"

known by a variety of appellations. Depending on their raison d'être, role, functioning, and curriculum content they are either designated as 'supplementary' (Archer, Francis, & Mau 2009, 2010; Gerrard, 2011; Maylor et al., 2010; Myers & Grosvenor, 2011; Reay & Mirza, 1997; Zhou & Kim, 2006), 'complementary' (Creese, Bhatt, Bhojana, & Martin, 2006; Francis, Archer, & Mau, 2008), 'ethnic' (Nelson-Brown, 2005; Zhou & Li 2003), 'mother tongue' (Lytra, 2012), 'Chinese language' (Archer, Francis, & Mau, 2010; Lu, 2001) or 'heritage' schools (He, 2004; Hsu, Pang, & Haagdorens, 2012, Wu et al., 2011). For comparison purposes, I opt for the most general term, namely 'Chinese community schools'. All the above-mentioned institutions have at least two characteristics in common: 1/ they have been established by and for an ethnically conscious group of Chinese immigrants, and 2/ they operate independently of the host countries' mainstream education system.

Internationally academics have identified a range of distinguishing features typical of community schools that (in)directly influence minority children's movement through mainstream education (Archer et al., 2009; Creese et al. 2006; Francis et al.; 2010; Portes & Kelly, 2008; Reay & Mirza, 1997; Strand, 2007; Zhou & Kim, 2006; Zhou & Li, 2003). Based on those findings it is stated that community schools are crucial for gaining a sound grasp of how ethnic social structures impact upon the educational integration and academic achievement of immigrant youth. However, despite this insight, in most non-English speaking contexts, including Flanders and Quebec, scholars have largely been neglecting the role of community education.[103] In Flanders, there was little to no information to be found about these particular schools in local academic literature.

In 2013, as a result of an interuniversity partnership between 'Université de Montréal' in Quebec (Canada) and KU Leuven, I was invited by the research unit CEETUM to carry out fieldwork for two months in two Chinese schools in Montréal. By comparing two 'case studies', one in Quebec and one in Flanders with each focusing more closely on two particular Chinese community schools, I devote this last chapter to the position and role of community schooling in the establishment of Chinese family strategies for education. This analysis replies to the pressing need to go beyond the exclusive identification of education with mainstream educational institutions. By glancing at other educational opportunities available

[103] By and large, the bulk of scholarly research on community schooling took place with Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean communities in the United States, Canada (English-speaking part) and the UK (Gerrard 2011, Reay & Mirza 1997)

in the context of multicultural societies (Nelson-Brown 2005; Sun, 2014) it offers an alternative view and contributes to the in-depth analysis of the Chinese pupils' educational trajectories, their families' identification processes and strategies to become successful in education (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

2. History and structure of Chinese community education in Flanders and Quebec

2.1. The Flemish case

In Flanders the foundation of a Chinese community education system is of a relatively recent date (Pang, 2007b). Antwerp Truth Church Belgium, a local Chinese Protestant Church, initiated the very first Chinese language school in Antwerp in 1982. The school was situated in the vicinity of the city's Chinatown and soon reached a student population of about a hundred students, including members and non-members of the church coming from various regions of Flanders. In 1986, the Association of Chinese in Belgium[104] created a second Chinese school in Antwerp. Both schools, however, struggled with lack of resources and encountered difficulties in finding suitable staff. Therefore, in 1990, the Chinese Association decided to end its classes to eventually establish a new Chinese school in 1994 conjointly with the Chinese Women's Association of Antwerp, named 'The Chinese School of Antwerp'. As a direct consequence, the Chinese Protestant Church started suffering a severe decline in the number of enrolments and eventually ended its classes in the year 2000. From its start, the Chinese school of Antwerp hosted not only students coming from within the district but also from other more distant Flemish or even Dutch provinces. Yet, for many other Chinese children in Flanders, the distance between home and the Chinese School concomitant to scheduling constraints presented by parents' professional commitments still hampered their active participation in the school. For that reason, in 1997 another non-profit Chinese organization[105] decided to establish an additional Chinese school in the city of Ghent. The current director, a member of the organization's executive board and a previous teacher at a Chinese community school in Holland, was assigned with the planning of the project. At the beginning most students were the offspring of the organization's members, but over the years the total number of pupils has gradually grown. In 2003, a third Chinese community

[104] Original name: "De Vereniging van Chinezen in België"
[105] "Chinese Gemeenschap België" (Approximately 20 members)

school was established in Leuven. Today, Flanders (Brussels excluded) has three Chinese community schools that have grown to become a prominent part of the Chinese community's educational realm.

All three schools offer Chinese language classes (Cantonese and/or Mandarin). Each has been set up with an explicit cultural agenda of preserving the mother tongue and of transmitting aspects of Chinese culture to the second and subsequent generations of Chinese immigrant youth. However, the following quote by the church minister witnesses that, in addition to intergenerational continuity, the first Chinese community school also has had the implicit goal to entice its students into coming to church. According to Yang (1999) and Sun (2014) many Chinese evangelical churches in America and Canada have likewise considered the establishment of Chinese community schools as an effective vehicle to recruit new members.

> Church minister: The parents thought it was very important for their children to learn Chinese and also to learn Chinese culture from us. So, when we started organizing Chinese classes, the Chinese people were very happy and some of the parents became Christians too.
> Anthropologist: Did they have to be Christians to be able to send their children here?
> Church Minister: No, no. We were open up to all Chinese. You can consider the school as a kind of social work. Some families though became Christians, yes. So that was good. I was a teacher and also our church members acted as voluntary teachers. That's how we generally run our church. So, because we had a lot of contact with the children we knew when they were having problems. And in those cases we went to visit the family and so we made contact with the Chinese people. Since we helped them, the families started to have confidence in us and by and by they became Christians. That is how we evangelized people.

From the beginning, the schools have been staffed with volunteer instructors of Chinese descent (albeit from different regions/countries of origin), either drawn from other Chinese community organizations or from the founder's and staff's own social networks. The schools also regularly receive applications from Chinese students who are studying at Flemish universities. With the exception of one teacher, all school staff was female. Although the directors claimed not to set exceeding stipulations to the educational degree of potential teachers, in the Chinese school of Ghent most teachers were highly to very highly educated (bachelor to doctoral degrees in a variety of disciplines). It was no accident that from the start this school only offered Mandarin classes and not Cantonese. The profile of the teachers in Antwerp was more diverse. According to the school director, many differences existed

between the Mandarin and the Cantonese teachers. The latter had been residing in Belgium for a much longer period and had lower educational qualifications. By contrast, most Mandarin teachers only had come to Belgium no more than five to six years before the time of this study and demonstrated a lower Dutch proficiency. These women often encountered difficulties in finding a job on the regular job market and were looking for meaningful ways to pass time. Other cited reasons for teaching Chinese classes were: to keep a connection with the homeland through social contact with other ethnic Chinese or feeling responsible for the second and third generations of Chinese immigrant youth.

> Chinese teacher (Ghent): To teach children Chinese, because at school they learn Dutch and French and other languages, but Chinese is our own language, our mother tongue. They cannot learn that here in mainstream education. That is why we do it.

> Director: Most teachers just want to do something. If they didn't teach, they would only be cleaning the house. And we (the Cantonese teachers) we do it because we are members of the Chinese Women Society and you know, when you have been doing it for so many years, it becomes a part of your daily life. Two weeks ago it was the last lesson of the school year and we all had diner together. The teachers invited me 'to dim-sum'. Usually I bring cakes with me or I invite them for dinner because I really like them and they all work for free, which I really appreciate. But now they invited me and it was really fun! You know, the women that are not restaurant owners (= the ones who are married to a Belgian man), they eat a lot of European food. Not like us; we eat Chinese every day. So, they enjoy eating Chinese food then.

All schools operate on an independent and non-profit basis. For their financial resources they mainly draw on the annual tuition fees of pupils, which only amount to approximately €100 per student. Textbooks are obtained free of charge from the Chinese Embassy in Brussels. On average, the schools' student population varies between seventy and two hundred pupils for each institution, numbers that appear to be in line with Chinese community schools in the Netherlands (Rijkschroeff, 1998). Classes are organized on Wednesday afternoons and/or on Saturdays. The schools of Leuven and Ghent are currently located in Flemish school buildings, the one in Antwerp in the building of the Association of Chinese in Belgium.

Picture – The façade of the Chinese community school in Antwerp.

Picture – Chinese language class at the Chinese community school of Antwerp.

2.2. The Quebec case

Canada is an extremely coloured nation, containing many diverse ethnicities. Almost twenty per cent of the population is born outside of the country (Costigan, Hua, & Su, 2010). Within the latter populace the Chinese form the largest visible minority group. Unlike the situation in Flanders, the history of Chinese community education in Quebec dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1855 and the 1950s the Chinese in Canada endured an

era of persistent institutional discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society, resulting from immigration laws and a system of 'head tax' that strongly restricted and regulated Chinese immigration to Canada (Li, 2001a; Li & Lee, 2005). It was during this period that missionaries from the Montreal Presbyterian Church opened the first Chinese Sunday School. Their initial aim was to teach English to newly arriving Chinese immigrants and to teach Chinese to the Canadian-born Chinese (Wang, 2003). In the subsequent years new Chinese language schools developed slowly alongside other Chinese churches. However, it took until the 1980s, with China's Reform and opening-up to the outside world, for most other Chinese language schools to be established in Montreal. They responded to an increased demand within the Chinese community to learn the mother tongue.

Similar to the Chinese community schools in Flanders, most Chinese community schools in Montreal aim at maintaining or promoting Chinese language and culture. Apart from Chinese language course, many schools also provide cultural enrichment classes (Chinese handcrafts, painting, music, etc.) and sports (ballet, martial arts, Ping Pong, etc.). They also organize summer camps that include a journey to China and are called 'Root seeking' summer camps. Different from the Flemish case, however, is that currently a considerable number of community schools in Quebec are no longer limited to the function of linguistic affiliation and cultural maintenance.[106] For instance, in order to assist new arrivals to become acclimatized to Quebec society, some schools have additionally established courses in Western cultural heritage (pastries, card making, etiquette, etc.). Again, others have evolved into a comprehensive supplementary education system. In view of facilitating socioeconomic integration and particularly in order to meet the educational needs and to strengthen academic learning of Chinese children, they offer after-school tutoring and courses that generally belong to the mainstream curriculum, such as French, English, Mathematics, and Sciences. All of these courses are either taught in French or in Chinese. During school holidays a variety of camps are organized that often consist of fulltime lessons in school subjects. Moreover, more than two thirds of these schools offer specific programs to prepare Chinese youngsters for a good school choice and school admission exams. And they are successful. In order for their children to get enrolled in the city's top high schools, many Chinese parents register them in such programs as of the age of eight or nine (Grade 5). By

[106] According to classifieds websites such as the *Chinese Yellow Pages* (http://www.cn411.ca, www.mtl163.com and http://www.xosearch.com), there are now more than thirty ethnic educational institutions in the Greater Montreal Area.

also focusing on reducing or avoiding adverse performance gaps, the purpose of these schools' mission clearly exceeds the concern for ethnic or cultural education. In fact, to a large extent they seem to echo the growing presence of the cram- schools or *buxiban* in the Asia-Pacific region.

Similar to the Chinese community schools in Flanders, most of those in Quebec are currently non-profit organizations that charge about $100-$150 as annual tuition fees. Additional operational budgets are generated through donations and fundraising activities. Staff members are likewise volunteers. For-profit are the new types of Chinese community schools, i.e. the ones belonging to the comprehensive supplementary education system (Lu, 2013), by which tuition fees may range from $100 to $500 per semester. Summer camps and intensive programs can cost as high as $1000 per summer. Whereas older schools usually operate on weekends, the newer schools regularly offer daily programs.

3. Research sites

In Flanders, ethnographic data were collected in the Chinese community schools of Antwerp and Ghent. In Montreal another two community schools were selected for field research: Jia Hua School of Montreal and Sino Canadian College of Language and Career. For the purpose of practicality, I will name the first school 'JH' and the second 'SCCLC'.

JH was founded in 1994. It is registered as a non-profit organization and was designated by the Chinese authorities as a model school for teaching Chinese. The school operates on Saturdays only and obtains its course material through the Chinese embassy, albeit not for free. The school offers a broad variety of courses, including Chinese, French and English language classes, culture and art classes (martial arts, Chinese traditional dancing, Tai Chi, Calligraphy, etc.), Ping-Pong, science and mathematics. Its initial goal was to serve the Chinese community, and although by the time of the research its doors open to everybody with interest in Chinese culture irrespective of age (+5), its student population was still predominantly Chinese. Over the years, the school has developed from a small initiative to a grand operation with approximately 1500 students and more than hundred classes. Apart from the Chinese language classes for non-Mandarin speakers, in all other classes the language of instruction is Mandarin Chinese. All teachers are Chinese volunteers, of which many are

highly educated (MA or PhD level). Each year the school organizes summer camps that bear the pregnant names of "Root Seeking Summer Camp" for pupils of Chinese descent and "Journey to China Summer Camp" for non-Chinese students.

SCCLC is a privately run school that had only been set up two years prior to the research. Also this school only operates on Saturdays. At the time of the study it was run by a Chinese female director and six from her former students whom she had trained to act as teachers and who were also shareholders of the school. Although the director was an MA graduate from Concordia University in Montreal, she stated that as a migrant she encountered many difficulties in finding a decent and full-time teaching job. That is why she eventually decided to set up her own school. She was also a former teacher at JH. The main purpose of SCCLC is to help Chinese children integrate into Montreal society. Therefore, apart from Chinese language classes, the institute also offers English, French, Ukulele, Yoga and ballet. The school's major focus on integration was also reflected in its use of American textbooks for teaching Chinese. According to the schools' director, the content and methodology of the Chinese Embassy's teaching material was insufficiently adapted to the daily life context of Chinese immigrant children as it was "purely teacher-centred", "too boring and too difficult".[107] The school also organizes thematic summer courses both with a Chinese and Western focus (Kung Fu, pastry making, cooking, card and flower making). Except for the French and English teachers, all other staff is Chinese and permanent resident in Canada. As for JH, school staff was relatively highly educated, but in SCCLC they were paid for their teaching. While for the French and English classes the director employed 'native' Canadian teachers, she preferred Chinese teachers in her classes with first generation Chinese students. She believed to those teachers would have a better feeling of what newcomers might experience trying to settle down in their new country. Classes cost about 7.5$/hour.

[107] For English language teaching the school made use of the book "New Concept English 2" by L.G. Alexander, an English language text book teaching British rules of English. The book is famous for being the textbook Mao Zedong once used to learn English. He commented on the New Concept English book with the famous quote "Once all struggle is grasped, miracles are possible." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Concept_English)

Picture – Entrance hall of SCCLC (Montreal)

Picture – Ballet class at SCCLC (Montreal)

4. Intergenerational ethno-cultural continuity

4.1. Bridging an intrafamilial language gap

As stated before, one of the central objectives of Chinese community schools in both Flanders and Quebec (especially the ones that operate on a non-profit basis) is to perpetuate the mother tongue (Cantonese and/or Putonghua, also known as Standard Mandarin) among second and subsequent generations of Chinese youth. This linguistic transmission is also one of the main reasons for the pupils to enrol and for parents to stimulate – or oblige – their children to participate in this kind of after-school education. As language is always used for some purpose (Cummins, 1994), it is interesting to examine to what purposes the Chinese language socialization is promoted in and through Chinese community schooling.

During their preschool years at home the large majority of the Chinese youngsters were brought up in Chinese and at the time of this study the Chinese language was still the main means of communication between parents and children. In a minority of families – primarily when parents had been residing in Belgium for a longer period of time or had experienced Flemish education themselves – at times parents and children were found to switch between Dutch and Chinese. This was, for example, the case in the families of Sophie and Terry. Only in two families the fathers were found to use another language than Chinese as the main communication method. Chen Gao's father, who had completed his master studies in France, spoke French with his son. The father of Yulian and Sam, who had grown up in Holland, spoke Dutch with his children at home. However, the predominance of Chinese language use in Flemish-Chinese families contrasts with the current decline of Chinese language use within and outside the British Chinese home, as was recently shown by Lau-Clayton (2014) and which she considers as an important example of the acceptance of British culture by Chinese immigrants.

On the other hand, similar to the findings of Lau-Clayton (2014), to many families the onset of formal schooling had constituted a significant period during which the children switched from predominant Chinese language use to Dutch as the pupils' formal education totally occurred in a non-Chinese speaking context. In the mainstream school curricula of both Quebec and Flanders, the home language is mainly being approached through the lens of subtractive acculturation (Roosens, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). As for Flanders where the

language of instruction in education is exclusively Dutch, in Quebec under Bill 101, immigrant children are obligated to attend mainstream schools in French by which hardly any opportunity is provided to maintain or develop the own mother tongue. In fact, none of the investigated Flemish mainstream schools allowed students to speak other languages than Dutch on the school grounds; a rule that was explicitly stipulated in the schools' regulations. From their accounts it was clear that most youngsters had no problem with the rule as such ('At school we speak Dutch') as it stimulated them to practice their Dutch language skills. Moreover, in both regions Chinese parents did consider their children's mastery of the host language as a central pre-requisite to their integration into mainstream society. Especially in Flanders I could observe Chinese parents encouraging their children to adequately master the Dutch language, particularly in view of their well-performance at school. They would stimulate them to practice their Dutch language skills at home through exposure to Flemish television and/or written media, or in case of significant deficiency, they would reach out to seek professional help. The latter strategy could also be observed with Chinese parents in Quebec.

> Father of Chen Gao: Some of his grades were not good with his last exams. He didn't totally flunk, though almost. He had 57% or something. Yes, it was not good, especially for Dutch and history. This has to do with language eh. Subjects in which language plays an important role are a problem for him.
> Anthropologist: Does it really have to do with his knowledge of Dutch?
> Father: That's what I think, yes, and that's also what the teacher thinks. Actually, during the parents meeting, his Dutch teacher was very, very friendly and he was also very engaged. He suggested for Chen Gao to come to his classroom every Monday for half an hour of extra tutoring. As such, he would be able to help Chen Gao on an individual level…And now, I can see he's improving, step by step. But, of course it's a long process. One cannot learn Dtuch in one day or even one month.
> Anthropologist: And will that suffice according to you?
> Father: No, of course not! He has to practice at home too, for example by reading the newspapers much more often. Recently we switched from *De Gentenaar* to *De Morgen,* because…yes, in my opinion the Dutch language level is much higher in *De Morgen.* I hope that it will help him. Previously, he only read the comic strips in the newspaper, but now we force him a little to also read different articles. And now, he reads every day, yes, every day. We hope that this will stimulate his feeling for the Dutch language.

> Kristina Wu: Sometimes my parents urge me to get away from my computer. Then, they want me to watch television. Flemish television, so I can listen to Dutch. Sometimes I say to my mother: "But why do you not watch Flemish television then?" And then my mother replies: "I don't have to study Dutch at school, but you do!"

Most pupils and parents, however, did not agree with a total ban on speaking one's mother tongue at school, especially during break times. Various Chinese youngsters indicated that sharing a common mother tongue generated a specific socio-emotional bond and that it felt natural to speak Chinese with other peers of Chinese descent. As such, in their Flemish schools they habitually flouted the official language regulations by hopping between Chinese and Dutch in conversations with Chinese schoolmates. Although there were examples of teachers making remarks to Chinese pupils, the latter were in fact rarely rebuked for transgressing the language regulations at school. Interviews with teachers also revealed that they were often either blind to the fact that Chinese pupils spoke Chinese amongst themselves or that this factuality was simply being ignored. Very different is the way some teachers in Flanders are found to deal with the mother tongue of the more problematized ethnic minority groups, as for example the Turkish and Moroccan. Teachers and school leaders within the Flemish *Bet You!* sample considered language as the basic condition for educational success and as such, often attributed the troubled school trajectories of immigrant students to the latter's poor knowledge of Dutch (Jalhay & Clycq, 2014). Recently, Clycq and his colleagues (Clycq et al., 2014) demonstrated that in the case of the latter, speaking the own language at home and at school was most often being interpreted as a sign of disinclination to integrate on the part of the pupils and their parents. The teachers in this study's sample never made such statements about the Chinese pupils.

Nevertheless, speaking Chinese at home with their parents and at school with peers did not prevent many second-generation Chinese youngsters – neither in Flanders nor in Montreal - from encountering significant limitations to their proficiency in using the Chinese language, particularly in written but also in oral modes. In fact, all students – except those who had just recently arrived in Belgium – felt much more eloquent in their Dutch skills compared with their Chinese speaking or writing abilities. Various youngsters said they were "bad" in Chinese and claimed to speak "a kind of baby-Chinese" or "simplified Chinese". In addition, pupils' ability to read and/or write Chinese characters (*hanzi*) ranged from quasi non-existent to an intermediate level. Not surprisingly, for the most part the Chinese respondents attributed this lack of fluency in Chinese to the youngsters' growing up in a Western society and to their immersion in a non-Chinese speaking educational context. At the same time, however, their parents - mainly those from the catering trade and parents from newly migrated families - saw themselves confronted with a relatively low proficiency in the host language. In terms of parental linguistic integration, Sun (2013) showed that people from Chinese origin in Quebec

are more likely to have knowledge of English than of French, and that a significant number of the Chinese in Quebec (14%) know neither English nor French. In Flanders the picture is slightly different, given that a considerable number of the parent interviews were held in Dutch. In many families – though not in all (e.g. recently arrived families) at least one parent had a basic knowledge of the Dutch language. Nonetheless, in both sites children's loss of proficiency in Chinese concomitant to low proficiency in French or Dutch on the part of parents at times constituted an important barrier in parent-teen communication, especially with regards to school-related topics. In some extreme cases in Quebec, family members had to choose a third language for communication at home, such as English.

> Sophie: At times the communication with my parents is a real problem, particularly for my youngest sister. Sometimes she wants to talk to my mother about school and so on but she can't because she doesn't speak very well Chinese. To my mother this is painful because she really wants to hear my sisters' stories but sometimes she can't really understand because her knowledge of Dutch is too limited. So, then my sister prefers to talk with Julie (elder sister) instead. So, that is the reason why my mother wanted us to be enrolled in the Chinese school. Also my Chinese is not really good and sometimes I regret that. For example, when I want to talk to my aunts, or mom or dad and I can't say what I want to say. Then it's frustrating.
>
> (…)
>
> Mother of Sophie: Yes, that's how it is eh. It's important for the children to master the Chinese language. It's important because I want my family to be close. Mostly, when my children use simple language (in Dutch) I can understand. But when they go beyond that, I don't understand them anymore and for them it's sometimes too hard to translate it into Chinese. So, what happens with my youngest daughter is that she just stops the conversation. She says: "Ok, never mind" and then she walks off. Oh, it's such a pity and it's not good for the family. I know my husband and I should learn Dutch, but it's also really necessary for them to learn Chinese. And it's easier for them, because they're still young.

> Protestant minister (former director of Chinese school in Flanders): Chinese youngsters sometimes get lost in their identity.
>
> Anthropologist: How do you see or experience that with the youngsters?
>
> Protestant minister: Many students are descended from restaurant families. Due to the restaurants' opening hours - generally from noon to midnight - parents are unable to spend much time with their children. They get to bed late and wake up late. Their children, on the other hand, have to get up early to go to school and when they arrive back home, their parents are at work again. So there are not so many moments during which those children can communicate with their parents. Actually, in many cases there is a lack of communication between them.
>
> Anthropologist: And what is the result of that?

Protestant minister: So for example, sometimes parents ask their children to translate Dutch documents for them, but in many cases the children's knowledge of Chinese is not sufficient to translate everything that is written down. Or they cannot express themselves to their parents.
Anthropologist: But they daily speak Chinese with their parents in the house?
Protestant minister: Yes, they do speak Chinese, but they cannot write and they cannot read, and they lack a lot of specific vocabulary. So, I found that daily conversations are ok, but that there is also a gap regarding language, and also culture. So, even when they speak Chinese, it is just not enough to explain all things related to school for example. Because, everyday children spend eight hours at school where they have contact with their teachers and schoolmates. And I can say: those youngsters are all Belgian, but then they go home to parents who are really Chinese [Laughs]. You see, that is a problem. That is why we started Chinese classes.

Director of Chinese school (Flanders): In my opinion it really was a pity that my youngest brothers and sisters could speak Chinese but not read or write it. Nor did my own children or the children of my friends. You know, at school children learn all possible languages, except for their own mother tongue. I have tried to teach my children Chinese myself, but that didn't work out well. Studying with your own mother is not the same, isn't? So that is why we started a Chinese school.

Mei-Lan: I cannot speak Dutch with my parents. They do not understand it very well. They might understand some things, but they can definitely not reply in Dutch. So, then they reply in Chinese, what I in turn not always understand, especially when it involves complex things.
Amber: In our family it's still quite ok. In other families it's sometimes much worse.
Mei-Lan: Yes, ok, that's true. But our use of accents is often very wrong, they say.

In both Flanders and Quebec, second-generation Chinese parents and/or their children felt and expressed the pragmatic need to bridge a significant language gap through institutional support. Many parents hoped that by attending a Chinese school their children would be able to maintain or improve their knowledge of the mother tongue. As such they hoped to facilitate the intrafamilial and inter-generational communication. Parents in particular considered this an essential condition in supporting and controlling the children in their daily activities, including their studies. Of course, the importance of Chinese proficiency is not limited to the social bonding within the nuclear family. Respondents equally pointed to the necessity of being able to communicate with grandparents, with relatives in the home country and with the wider Chinese community, both local and at the transnational level.

Furthermore, the mastery of the Chinese language not only provides support of "inter-generational communication" but also "a credential" in the competitive global labour market. With the increased economic impact of China in the international arena, many respondents

regardless of SES, gender or even country of origin, increasingly perceived speaking Chinese (i.e. Mandarin in particular), as a valuable skillset for children's future careers. Chinese teachers too made repeated references to "economic rationales" or motivations with regards to the benefits of Chinese schooling (cf. Francis et al., 2010, Lau-Clayton, 2014). So, parents' reasoning for stimulating their children to retain their mother tongue was also often related to future prospects, as opposed simply to mitigate barriers to intra-familial communication. In Flanders, this belief in Chinese as a credential in global competition is underscored as some mainstream schools currently offer Chinese as an extra-curricular or optional subject (exceptional) within the formal curriculum. In September 2011, the Confucius Institute of Leuven launched a pilot project called "Chinese in high school". In his memorandum Flemish Minister of Education, Pascal Smet, gave the liberty to secondary schools to offer the official languages of the BRIC countries within the existing curriculum. Of course, this has everything to do with the economic importance of these countries and nothing with the actual presence of Chinese students in Flemish schools. However, at the time of the research none of the schools I studied offered Chinese language lessons. At the moment they are still a minority in Flanders.

Anthropologist: What language do you like speaking most?
Yulian: Dutch.
Anthropologist: And do you think it's important to know Chinese?
Yulian: Yes, I think so, because Chinese is becoming more and more important in the world and also my parents say that it is important for my future to know Chinese.

Teacher 1: We teach children Chinese, because at school they learn Dutch and French and other languages. But Chinese is our own language, our mother tongue. They cannot learn that here in mainstream education. That is why this Chinese school was created, for the Chinese children in Belgium.
Teacher 2: It is also important for their future.
Teacher 3: Yes, very important for their future.
Anthropologist: Can you explain that to me? Why exactly is it important for their future?
Teacher 1: Because it is knowledge eh!
Teacher 3: For when they go back to China and visit relatives.
Teacher 1: For when they are looking for a job.
Teacher 2: And Chinese becomes more and more important in the world, also in Belgium. [All other teachers nod in assent].
Teacher 4: One thing is sure: Chinese is becoming more and more popular. Actually a lot of Belgians start to learn Chinese. In the newspaper I read an article about an investigation done by the University

of Leuven. It said that 20% of the Belgian parents want their children to learn Chinese! So yeah, in the future there will even be more people in Flanders learning Chinese. So, when you are Chinese yourself, you can't give that (Chinese proficiency) up!
Teacher 2: We want the children to have chances in the future. We want them to be able to find different kinds of jobs. That is also important eh! And also the contacts with China.
[Group discussion with Chinese teachers at a Chinese community school in Flanders]

4.2. The perpetuation of Chinese 'virtues'

Apart from language transmission also the perpetuation of culture is stated to be an indirect benefit of learning Chinese and attending Chinese schools (Chow, 2004; Francis et al., 2009, 2010; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Throughout the research parents and teachers at both sites highlighted that the transmission of culture as another key purpose of Chinese schooling. In line with the findings of Francis et al. (2010), respondents often referred to 'Chinese culture' as a kind of fixed package of traditional stories, legends, handcrafts, customs, knowledge of historical facts, and celebrations. In this regard, as described above, many schools in Montreal provided additional cultural enrichment lessons and activities to both Chinese and Western audiences. In Flanders, as was also the case in Montreal, teachers and personnel often celebrated Chinese traditional holidays with their students, and encouraged pupils to attend summer camps in China, which was considered by some to be part of their Chinese upbringing.

In a personal field note from SCCLC (Montreal) I wrote down: "*Today the director and I were talking about the celebration of Chinese festivities at the school. They seem to celebrate a lot of them in which not only children but also parents appear to partake. Last week I could indeed observe a group of mothers preparing all kinds of meals in the school's kitchen and fathers running off and on with supplies in view of a coming celebration. Interestingly, the director said that the joint celebration of these kind of activities was "like a potlatch", which is a famous native Canadian festivity by which wealth is shared amongst members of the same community (cf. anthropologist Boas)*." Here, the wealth that the director was indirectly referring to, transcends the material dimension of the notion. In addition to the provision of a vast package of observable cultural elements, parents and teachers in both contexts repeatedly referred to the community schools' role in the transmission of specific cultural values and behavioural norms, or in the words of Francis, in the perpetuation of

"Chinese virtues" (Francis et al., 2010). Among the most quoted examples of such virtues were Chinese courtesy, filial piety, respect for teachers, discipline, and also the value of studying and working hard. In fact, much of the so-called cultural transfer occurred indirectly throughout the method of language teaching and the relationship between teachers and pupils.

Director of Chinese school (Flanders): Our central aim is to teach them Mandarin. We want to enable them to speak it, but also to write and read it. Those skills are very important.
Anthropologist: Is it also your aim to pass on certain aspects of Chinese culture or Chinese values and norms?
Director: Yes, of course, that's part of it! It is actually interwoven with the language teaching in the book.
Anthropologist: And how does that work exactly? Can you explain?
Director: It is not easy that way, because all kids here are already European as a result of their daily education in mainstream schools. That is why you can't expect them to be equal to their peers in China or Hong Kong. There are big differences. Here the children are very open and they all talk during classes. In Hong Kong that's forbidden, just impossible! But you can't have the same amount of discipline here. The kids here are used to more freedom. (…) And teachers here don't try to change that. I wouldn't work anyway (laughs).
Anthropologist: I once saw a story in a book that was about filial piety, so children's respect for parents. Is that in your book as well?
Director: Yes, it's in the book.
Anthropologist: And in your opinion, do children actually learn something out of it?
Director: Well, not totally, but still a part of it. Not totally though, because their background is very different. In Hong Kong children will accept 100% all the things that are written in the book. But children here don't, only partially.

Teacher 1: With us, Chinese families, parents always force their children to study harder. As far as I can notice: harder than the children here. Yes, that is the most important value that we try to pass on.
Anthropologist: And is there a difference between lower and higher educated parents?
All teachers simultaneously: No! I think that's the same. It's really the same.
Teacher 2: All parents!
All teachers: Yes!
Teacher 3: For us, the education of our children is the most important thing.
Teacher 2 and Teacher 3: the most important.
(Focus Group Discussion with teachers at Chinese school in Flanders)

Canadian teacher of English at SCCLC (Montreal): At first they looked at me as if I came from the moon. They asked about my wrinkles. I spoke very fast, but the school felt I was needed as a native speaker. They, however, still think I am tall and loud. I am definitely an outsider. I can be

compassionate, but I'm not one of them. I don't have their experience, I don't share their culture; they don't tell me their problems, at least not the most significant ones. (…) But they are very respectful towards me, because I'm their teacher. For example, parents or teachers would tell their kids: "Say hello to your teacher!" So, they are respectful, but it is a proscribed relationship. But, maybe also because many parents don't speak English.

Director of SCCLC (Montreal): Parents are not worried anymore when their children are here. They also call me to see how their children are doing and I would call them if their child was not performing or behaving as he/she should. I think it's different with the Canadian teachers. I don't' know if it's true, but I think that in their opinion after work it's done.
(…)
Our classes are not only about language teaching. It's also about passing on our culture and certain values to the youngsters. Take for example name giving. In Canada pupils most often address their teachers by their given name. In Chinese culture as a youngster you would never do that. So, we teach them to say: "Chen laoshi" or 'Teacher Chen'. As such they learn about the prescribed relationships between younger and older people and about how they should approach someone in a respectful way.

Various Chinese parents claimed that their children received too much freedom in Canada or Belgium, and depicted this as a major reason for why their children were at times disobedient or disrespectful. Some of them hoped that Chinese community schooling could be used as a means to reinforce what they believed to be traditional Chinese values, such as loyalty to one's family and obedience to authority. Although the teachers and the parents themselves recognized that the schools might only be partially successful in this regard, significant is the way in which these respondents participated in a discursive (re)construction of their offspring's Chinese identity. The notion of "Chineseness" is then somehow placed in opposition to "a deficient Western Other" (Francis et al., 2010, p. 110; See also: Anthias, 2001; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992). In this way, the behaviour of the Chinese pupils was either 'hailed or ignored according to the extent of 'fit' with these constructions of identity (Francis et al., 2010). Illustrative of this process is the way in which the teachers and the principals of the Chinese schools spoke about the Chinese pupils' divergent behaviour at the Chinese school and in their mainstream educational institutions.

Director of Chinese school (Flanders): Chinese children who behave badly at Chinese school also behave badly in their mainstream school, albeit less badly than in Chinese school and especially in comparison to their Flemish peers. It is true that most Chinese pupils are actually more obedient in comparison to other children (meaning: children with other ethnic backgrounds, also White).

Mother (Montreal): To Chinese people, westerners are living a "wild life" with lots of drinking in bars, changing relationships, drugs, and so on. The same for many western children in school: they have much less discipline than the average Chinese child.

With these respondents, this alleged 'exemplary' or 'model' behaviour of Chinese pupils in mainstream education was considered as an essential part of the Chinese identity, and especially that of a Chinese learner. They argued that Chinese pupils behaved as they did "because they were Chinese", mirroring a clear interplay of processes of self- and other-ascription by which specific values and concomitant behavioural patterns were used as markers of cultural difference (Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 2001; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). What is ignored in such narratives is the relatedness of the construction of the Chinese identity with the general expectations within dominant society and among Western teachers, in particular with regards to Chineseness. As Francis et al. (2010) has put it, such pupils encounter, a "demand for production of symmetry between body and identity". This could explain why Chinese pupils tend to act 'more Chinese' at their mainstream schools than they actually do in their own ethnic institutions, where pupils were also allowed a relatively 'free' and 'loose' conduct. During the lessons, pupils would often talk with each other and openly show feelings of boredom (yawning, laying heads down on the desk…). Some Chinese youngsters were sometimes downright naughty, as could be observed during the lessons and as was mentioned by various pupils themselves.

Terry: When Amber and I are together in the Chinese school, then we often behave in impossible ways. Teachers really think we're hell, really hell.
Anthropologist: So, what do you do then?
Terry: We hide pens and board dusters or we throw candies. Then the teacher takes away our I-pod and then we take it back from out of her trousers pocket (laughs). We actually do all kinds of stuff. We are really the bad pupils of the class. Also, Amber, she often shrieks in the classroom: èèèèèèh. And then the teacher gives us a look, trying to make us pay attention. And it's not that we do it to get attention, it's just that sometimes the lessons are a bit boring. And then something has to happen, right?

In many cases teachers would not strictly monitor the general compliance with rules. Although these ways of conduct were often followed by comments of the teacher, there was little actual punishment. Of course, reactions did vary from one teacher to another. Similar to what other research about Chinese youngsters in community schools has shown (Archer et al., 2009), Chinese schools are important spaces for pupils to experiment with alternative school identities. There, pupils can escape from the positive or model minority characteristics that

teachers in mainstream education ascribe them. As their own ethnic identity is the norm in these schools, other subidentities can be discovered and developed. This means that subidentities can also change or nuance the 'positive stereotyping' of the ethnic identity that mostly occurs within mainstream education.

Notwithstanding the fact that many of the interviewed parents recognized the existence of dual or multiple identities as a result of their children's growing up in a Western society, their narratives still reflected – or at least reinforced – a belief in the natural transmission of ethnic identity through consanguinity and a belief in a shared past (cf. the family-of-origin metaphor as developed by Bently, 1989 and Roosens, 1998). However, to give meaning and 'content' to the ethnic identity certain forms of behaviour, as well as language and 'culture' were considered essential, not only from an intra-individual perspective ('A Chinese should speak Chinese'), but also from an interpersonal perspective, particularly stressing the importance of intergenerational communication and understanding. The latter was felt to be fundamental to ensure intergenerational continuity and solidarity within one's family and broader ethnic community.

> Father of Chen Gao: For us it is important that he can speak Chinese and that he knows something about China as well. He has to…yes. Because he is now 'ni l'un ni l'autre'. He is not a real Chinese, not a real Belgian, not one of both. But in his blood there are Chinese roots. So, he has to know a little.
>
> Mother of Lei: Yes, but our lives…. They were born here, but our roots is Chinese, isn't? We still have things left of our own culture. They should learn to know a little bit of that and not forget it all. They also have to be used to the Chinese language, so they don't forget about their roots.
>
> Mother of Sophie & Julie: Sophie is only about twenty per cent Chinese, but Julie is more! (Laughs).
> Sophie: Yes! (Laughs)
> Mother: Julie is maybe fifty per cent.
> Anthropologist: And what makes the difference then?
> Mother: Julie has a lot of Chinese friends too and she has boyfriend, he's Chinese. And I don't know, it's her character. And she's just more interested also in Chinese culture. And now that she's growing up, she can talk very well Chinese, so I talk to her a lot. I talk to her about my experiences, about things concerning the family, about cultural things…. Iris is now just like my friend, I can now talk very deeply with her. I can tell her my experiences and she understands. So that is why she's a bit more…yeah, she's getting more and more Chinese. (Laughs)
>
> Anthropologist: Sophie, will you talk Chinese with your children?

Sophie: Yes, yes, because I want my father to be able to talk to his grandchildren, although I'm sure, their Chinese will not be so perfect. (Laughs). And it might surprise you, but I will also send them to the Chinese school (Laughs louder). I know I hated it and all, but I want my children to be able to speak Chinese.

Anthropologist: Do you consider it important to know the mother tongue of your parents, Mandarin in this case?
Chen Gao: Yes, sure. Because Chinese is like….it's an identity of me. Or, it is a part of my identity. So, in my opinion when you're not able to speak Chinese as a Chinese person, you also lose your roots.
Anthropologist: So, when you can't speak Chinese, you're not Chinese anymore?
Chen Gao: When I would meet a Chinese person who doesn't speak Chinese, I would think: "Oh, poor thing". Pf, of course you will always remain Chinese by appearance, but yes… the Chinese language is a big part of our culture. And like when you eat moon cakes, you need to understand the story behind it. You need to know all those things. In the future I will also speak Chinese with my children, and I will probably also send them to the Chinese school.

As these community schools are represented in some way as complementary to the family socialization processes from the perspective of the Chinese respondents, it explains why the managements of most schools almost solely accept personnel of Chinese descent. A Flemish Sinologist may reportedly master the Chinese language, yet never to the same extent as an 'authentic Chinese' and more importantly, can he or she certainly not transmit the Chinese culture and values. However, at the same time the Flemish community schools also preferred teachers who had been living in Belgium for a substantial period of time because they were afraid that newly arrived volunteers would not be able to immerse themselves in the hybrid culture of the Chinese second-generation pupils.

Anthropologist: Does the Chinese language teacher have to be Chinese?
Director of Chinese school (Flanders): No.
Anthropologist: Imagine a Belgian woman who has studied Sinology. Could she teach here?
Director: Yes, it is possible, but in my experience… how should I say this…In the past we also had a class for adults taught by a Belgian Sinologist. When I talked to some of the students who had finished their Chinese studies at our school, in my opinion their Chinese was not good enough. Hence, when you as a teacher do not master the language very well, you probably will pass on your own errors to the children. That is not good. That is why I prefer a Chinese.
Anthropologist: And do you think, because they are Chinese, they can also pass on other things to the children?
Director: Yes, yes, of course. There is language, but culture is also very important to us. For example in Chinese culture, every year there are different festivities eh and you have to be able to teach the

children why these festivities exist and how people celebrate them, now and in the past. You also have to know China's history eh. For example, children ask: "How is that in Beijing?" or "What does that story mean?" Someone who doesn't know cannot tell the children anything. So, someone who is originally Chinese is better cut for the job. I'm not going to discriminate against Belgian people though; that is not my aim; also man or woman, that is the same for me. But still…you know.

Director of Chinese school (Flanders): There are more people applying for the job than I can take on. Yes, because at the University here there are many Chinese students from Mainland China. Especially that group sends me a lot of applications. Although some of them can speak some Dutch because they have been living here for some years, I still prefer Chinese teachers who have been living here for a longer period of time. They know the situation here in Belgium. For them it's easier to intervene in certain circumstances. Someone who just recently arrived from China cannot do that. Moreover, if children ask something, he or she might not understand.

5. Formal and informal support with mainstream education

As said, various Chinese children and parents in Flanders and Quebec experience difficulties when they want to discuss or solve educational issues together, with language constituting a main barrier. In some cases community schools seem to offer a solution. In Quebec, where various Chinese schools offer mainstream class subjects, including Mathematics and Science, children can learn technical vocabulary in their own language, which facilitates communication with their parents on educational issues. As such, the community school offers opportunities to increase parental support. In Flanders, Piqueray came to similar conclusions with the Polish community schools who apart from language learning, also focus on an elaborate Polish curriculum with subjects as mathematics, geography, etc. (Clycq, 2014).

While some parents stress difficulties in helping their children with school tasks in mainstream education, they often can and do take up this role with respect to similar tasks in the community schools. My observations have taught me that some parents who seldom participate in the mainstream school's activities, do take up a much more active role in the community schools. Some parents, for example, would insist on teaching Chinese characters (*Hanzi*) to their children at home, providing their children with writing and reading exercises, partly based on books they brought from China. Not only wanted these parents to install an ability with their children to recognize and write characters, but they also saw it as some kind

of general training of the mind. “There is a deeply entrenched belief that the only and one orthodox way to learn Chinese characters is through regular and repetitious writing and this over a lengthy period of time” (Hsu, Pang & Haagdorens, 2012, p. 1592). Being active agents in community schooling allows parents to construct a different role for themselves and acquire more prestige and status, not only towards teachers, but also vis-à-vis their children. They become active agents that can directly support their children and they are also approached and defined as such by the teachers in the community schools. This process is important as it can foster well-being and resilience, not only amongst children, but also amongst parents.

Non-native born immigrant pupils may face significant difficulties in their integration into the new school system. This is particularly the case for first generation Chinese youth in Quebec and Flanders, where the major language of schooling is either French or Dutch, which most Chinese pupils do not master upon arrival. Due to significant language and cultural barriers, parents may also face bigger challenges in offering their children direct assistance with school assignments. Therefore, in Montreal Chinese parents often enrol their children in Chinese after-school institutions where youth benefits from services relevant to their formal education. Many Chinese schools in Montreal provide special French tutoring programs for newly arrived children, as well as English courses, and other subjects by which in many cases the language of instruction is Chinese. The use of the home language supports them in mastering new subject material and as such constitutes an important tool for learning (cf. Nicaise & Desmet, 2008). In some cases the language courses are also considered a means to reach truly high standards.

> Student (SCCLC, Montreal, 15 years old, Mandarin and French speaking): I am weak in English, especially in writing. The professors here can explain grammatical rules to me in Chinese. That really helps me a lot. It helps me to raise my grades in school.
>
> Director (SCCLC, Montreal): Many of my secondary school students have really improved their English skills, some even with more than ten points at school.
>
> Caption from website JH (Montreal): It seems odd, but it is true. We do offer English courses and we feel obliged to do so. This is because children of Chinese families do not learn enough English at school in Quebec. Having said that, we believe our Chinese children are privileged to live in Quebec, where they can be the only Chinese descendants who speak good French in North America. Our goal is to train

> our children to be perfect trilingual, which is absolutely essential and beneficial for them in their future development and endeavour.
>
> Teacher (School 1, Montreal): In my maths-class I use Chinese textbooks. You know, there are different ways of teaching mathematics. We use the Chinese way, which is very different from the Western way. The terminology is Chinese because we don't know the terminology in French or English. When children are able to combine both systems… that should be perfect.

In Montreal, the Chinese community schools also give free lectures and conferences aimed at assisting youngsters and their parents in gathering essential information on school choice and processes of enrolment. They offer information on high school ranking and high school entrance examination preparation programs, as a means of increasing opportunities for Chinese pupils to be enrolled in the top schools. Some schools have even developed special strategies to help their students excel in these kinds of exams. Generally, the Chinese schools in Montreal aim to respond to diverse needs among their clientele. For example, for pupils who face difficulties with certain subjects, most schools offer either one-on-one tutoring or small class tutoring services, depending on the nature of the problems encountered. For those students who already excel in school, these schools provide additional advanced courses in various subjects as well as programs to help such pupils excel in all kinds of contests, as for example Mathematics or Chemistry tournaments. As such, schools aim to provide students with extra credentials that could benefit their application for a scholarship or university entrance.

> Mother (Montreal): In order to get accepted into a private middle school, children need to pass a test first. The Chinese schools help our children a lot to accomplish that by giving them a lot of exercises. It's just like in China: lots and lots of exercises. And that really helps!
>
> Mother (Montreal): You know, Chinese language learning is very different from Canadian language learning. In the Chinese way you get a lot of grammar and exercises on grammar, while in Canada students are given words and are then asked to form sentences, plus there are a lot of thematic projects, for example about animals or a famous person. In the Canadian way there's a lot of focus on communication skills, while in China that is almost non-existent. So, in the Chinese school, our children are taught languages in both ways: English by a western teacher with his own methods and Chinese by a Chinese teacher based on Chinese methods. This mix is perfect, because it broadens their mind and helps them to learn new things.

Mother (Montreal): We prefer private schools for our children. Many Chinese parents even buy an address so that they can send their children to a better school in that area.

Native English teacher at Chinese school (Montreal): The Chinese have a very big push for success. For instance, mothers of four year-olds ask me: "How is he or she doing?" Canadian parents on the other hand would ask: "Do you think he's enjoying it?" Chinese parents want to get ahead. I now get it. They also want their children to go to good schools and to perform well. Previously I taught English in two elementary schools, here in Montreal. The difference in behaviour between the Chinese and the other groups was unbelievable. With the other children I often spent half of the time keeping things under control, while the Chinese were clearly there to learn. Sometimes their mothers even came in and said: "Write that down! Listen to what your teacher says!" There are a lot of expectations with Chinese parents and thus also with their children. I tried to loosen them up a little bit by bringing my ukulele to English class. Also during conversations in class the children refer a lot to their experiences in mainstream education. They see this school as part of their other school. It's part of their schooling. The courses they follow here are part of the bigger plan to be successful in Canada. By the time they come to conversation class they have totally internalized that plan.

Unlike the Chinese community schools in Montreal, the ones in Flanders do not offer any formal tutoring or other courses apart from Chinese. In contrast to the situation in many other Western countries such as the US or Canada, the Chinese community educational system in Flanders is exclusively engaged in teaching the mother tongue and culture and is not directly aimed at facilitating socio-economic integration or fostering Chinese pupils' academic achievement in mainstream education. In the opinion of some school personnel, Chinese children are doing quite well in the Flemish educational system, which would suggest no need for supplementary tutoring. Yet, as I have shown earlier, several Chinese pupils do encounter difficulties at school, and more importantly, many Chinese parents do look for extra-curricular tutoring to overcome this problem, a trend that has a transnational dimension. As I have demonstrated earlier, in Flanders likewise the narratives of Chinese respondents revealed a strong desire with parents for their children to perform well and even to excel educationally resulting from a complex interplay between a reaction to their minority status, the transnational Chinese *eduscape* and their Chinese cultural heritage. However, the director of one of the Chinese schools clearly disagreed with the presupposed role and necessity of private teachers. She believed that many Chinese parents were exaggerating in their search for external help as she was convinced that children received enough support at mainstream schools to be able to perform well. In the following quote she explicitly refers to similar trends in Asia and thereby deplores the shrinking inherent value of learning.

Director of Chinese school (Flanders): Many women of our association have limited knowledge of Dutch. It sometimes happens that at a certain age, their children don't want to go to school anymore or that they have problems keeping up with the school's subject matter. Do you know what Chinese mothers do in such case – or maybe I have to say 'Asian mothers': they say: "Oh, we don't speak Dutch very well, so at the start of the school year we will search for a private teacher who can help our child." I am totally against that!

Anthropologist: Why?

Director: Pupils have to pay attention in school, in the classroom. Why does a child go to school? It goes to school to learn and at school you have people to guide the children in their learning, namely the teachers. Pupils have to pay attention to the teachers while they are in class, not afterwards at home with a private teacher.

Anthropologist: Do you mean that even before children encounter any problem at school, parents already decide to involve a private teacher?

Director: Exactly! Yes, and it happens a lot, a lot! Even this week, I received a telephone call from a young mother in her thirties. Her eldest son now goes to his first year of primary school. So, she called to ask me for advice. The first thing I told her was: "Don't start looking for a private teacher"! You know what she said? She said: "I've already found one. I speak Chinese fluently, but I don't know any Dutch. Imagine that my child is not able to keep up with the courses. Well, in that case he already has someone who can help him." I replied: "But why would he not be able to keep up? He is born here and went to a Flemish kindergarten! And what is more important: he has to listen very well to his teachers in order to keep up with his Dutch." Pf. You know, I believe it's the same thing in Hong Kong and China and Japan and Taiwan, everywhere! Pupils just want to be the best in their class. They no longer go to school to learn, but to get good grades and to receive high ranked diplomas. I don't get that. (…) My children never received private tutoring. I really don't think that is necessary. I've never received it either when I was young. Whenever a student has problems, then there is the school to help. Come on, when I came here, I didn't know a word of Dutch, but I received extra tutoring at school for free. It was a school's initiative. If I was able to keep up, then for a child who was born here it definitely must be possible.

It is important to note that the Flemish educational design is very different from the Canadian, with the latter representing a much more competitive education system. In Flanders, students do not need to excel in high school in order to be admitted to high-ranked universities; almost any secondary education diploma gives access to any university or scholarship. This might be one of the reasons why the Chinese community education system in Flanders does not (yet) formally focus on promoting the academic achievement of Chinese youngsters. Furthermore, the Chinese community in Quebec is much older and larger than in Flanders, and is mainly concentrated in Montreal, where it has established a mature institutionalized and efficient network to support its own members, including new arrivals. As

one sector of diverse ethnic institutions there, Chinese language schools have become an important community resource for Chinese families.

Meanwhile, in Flanders the support occurs on a more informal and indirect basis, as a kind of unintended consequence. Research data shows that teachers and personnel in the Flemish Chinese community schools equally take on an encouraging role vis-à-vis Chinese pupils and their parents, albeit in a more informal fashion. For example, the pupils were said to sometimes speak with the teachers about the difficulties they encountered at their mainstream school, to which teachers would response by giving advice and orientation. Furthermore, some Chinese school personnel spoke about giving advice to parents on parenting skills and educating children, even though parents did not necessarily follow the given advice.

> Director at Chinese school X (Flanders): There are students who have difficulties with learning. I always have to urge them: 'study, study!' Sometimes they say: "I can't keep up". Then I answer them: "So work harder or find something else"! Nowadays there are so many things you can do. There are much more opportunities for children than twenty years ago. When university is too difficult, then you can go to college or learn a craft. There is so much choice! But having only a diploma of secondary education, that is nothing. Even a university degree is nothing nowadays. I don't know if parents would agree with what I say now, but in general, most Chinese from Hong Kong, they have a Chinese restaurant. It's hard work: every weekend and every holiday they have to work. When others have fun, we are forced to work. I think most parents want something else for their children. Unless the children are really bad learners or don't want to go to school anymore when they turn 18, they want a better life for their children. So, what do you do then? You make them study and give them chances!

> Director at Chinese school X (Flanders): When my students ask me: "Teacher, next year I'm going to start secondary education. What should I study?" Then I always tell them: "Choose for the highest education form. In case it is too difficult, you can still make the transition to a lower education form. Don't begin low, because you can't go up." That's what I always say, also to parents and friends and so on. I think after some time they start to get it. No, as a parent or more generally, as a human being, you should never choose for the easiest thing. Instead, you should aim high. This relates to studies, but also to many other things in life.

> Director at Chinese school Y (Flanders): I've always stimulated my own children to study hard. At university my eldest daughter always had magna cum laude, so she was able to find a good job immediately after she graduated. Therefore I always tell the children: "Now, it's time to study. You have to work hard for twenty years, but after that you can enjoy life for forty years. If you would do it

the other way around, you would have twenty years of pleasure but forty years of difficulties and trouble." It's true, isn't?

6. Chinese community schools as a safe haven and source of social support

Apart from the transfer of the mother tongue and culture and its role in the identity construction of the youngsters, the Chinese community schools also held other functions that could be of significance to the pupils' trajectory in mainstream education. Research has shown that participation in extracurricular activities, such as after-school education, can constitute an important source of emotional social capital (Antrop-González, Garrett, & Vélez, 2010). Moreover, a young person's peer group is a central factor in his or her social development (Hartnett, 2008; Naber, 2004). For many Chinese youth in both Flanders and Quebec, Chinese community schools indeed served a vital role in forming and developing co-ethnic peer networks. Through the schools students came into contact with other Chinese youngsters with whom they shared similar experiences and with whom they could build meaningful relationships. Various Chinese youngsters testified to a prevailing pleasant ambience in the Chinese community schools, which for some constituted an important motivational ground to continue or resume classes. Others talked of sharing information on schools or study strategies, or merely cheered the opportunity the school offered them to share their smaller and bigger stories with friends.

Student (JH, Montreal): It's a different atmosphere here than in my mainstream school. A Chinese friend invited me and now I have my best friends here. Everything is more free here. We can talk about everything we want, about the things that happen in our lives. I can't do that at my regular school.

Field notes during English class (SCCLC, Montreal): In between, students speak Chinese with each other. They often laugh. There is a very relaxed ambience. Pupils seem at ease with each other.

Terry: I go to Chinese school to have fun and of course also to learn something.

Julie: I met a lot, really a lot of Chinese friends at the Chinese school.

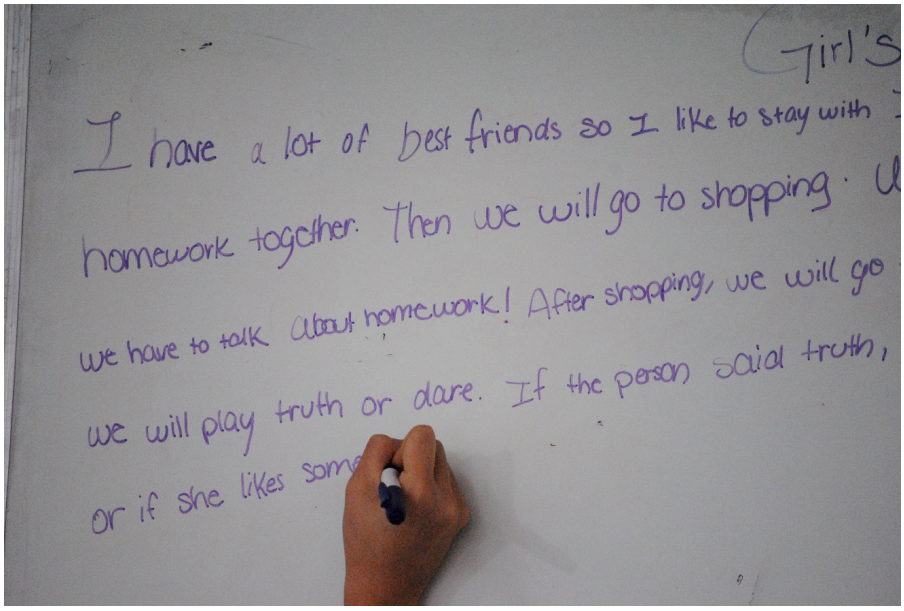
Some students specified that the ethnic homogeneity of the student population in the school lie at the basis of the good atmosphere there. According to these youth, they formed a cohesive group because of their shared ethnic background. Unlike in mainstream schools,

these schools provided a “safe space” where pupils could express their identity without fear of being rejected or mocked (Francis et al., 2009; Zhou & Kim, 2006). In Montreal, the peer networking appeared especially important for newly arrived pupils.

> Mother (Montreal): The Chinese school is really helpful because it offers supplementary support, even if we have to pay for it. It also offers psychological support to my son because now he feels he’s not alone. You know, it’s not easy for immigrant children at school. In the classroom it’s the Quebecois versus the immigrants. Last year, he told me he didn’t like going to school because he had no friends. Maybe other children did not want to play with him? I wanted to know the reason. My son is very into Mathematics but the other children did not have the same interest. For a moment I taught I had made a mistake. I thought I should have put him in a sports club like his classmates. But I didn’t. But now he’s ok with his classmates, he feels stronger and he can handle it.

> Mei-Lan: I don’t really know why, but I feel more easily accepted by other Asians.

Picture – English class at SCCLC (Montreal)



Picture – English class at SCCLC
(Pupils were asked to write about what teenage girls/boys do when they are together.)

Similar to various immigrant children, also their parents often face difficulties in forming tight networks with other adults (Zhou, 1997). Supplementary educational institutions can make an important contribution in overcoming these difficulties and gaps. They are physical sites where formerly unrelated immigrants can come to socialize and rebuild social ties (Zhou & Kim, 2006). As such, also for the parents the school serve as a means to form and develop social capital. Before, after and often also during classes, parents get together to talk and to share information, including about their children's education.

> Mother (Montreal): While my daughter is in class I talk to the other parents. Many of us just wait here in the lobby until the classes end. It's nice. We talk about what is happening in the Chinese community and about our kids. We give each other advice on different matters, like which school to choose for our child or which area to live in. Usually Chinese don't want to live in places where many black people are living.

Although the respondents mainly perceived the ethnic homogeneity as positive, their narratives also revealed that at the same time they attached great importance to openness vis-à-vis other ethnic communities. Good social networking with individuals from the dominant society were considered crucial for more than instrumental reasons, such sus acquiring Dutch proficiency or obtaining a good position on the labour market. In Flanders on the other hand, Chinese pupils maintained peer groups that were most often ethnically diverse, which in some

cases resulted from the mere fact that many of them were enrolled in mainstream schools with an ethnically heterogeneous student body. Moreover, not all pupils desired or felt at ease in situations of ethnic homogeneity. Some of them considered it relatively stifling for reasons of increased social control. That said, particularly for the first generation youngsters in Montreal the Chinese community schools also constituted an important means to reach out to the dominant society and a significant bridge between their home and school context. The following quote and observations are striking for that matter.

> English teacher at SCCLC (Montreal): The English classes help the students in their social circles. They feel more included and less alien because it helps them to understand more and to speak better English. Last time we talked about humour. The reason for that was that one pupil felt left out in school because he didn't understand the jokes that his Canadian schoolmates were telling. So, I made him write what he remembered of the joke on the black board and we had a conversation about it.
>
> Field note the week after (SCCLC, Montreal): Last week the teacher gave the students the following homework: Search for a joke in the English language and bring it to next week's class. This week the teacher prepared an entire set of English jokes for the students that should help them to understand typical expressions. Example: 1/"Why did the cookie go to the doctor? Because he felt crummy." – 2/"When I went to Starbucks for coffee, they lied. It wasn't Starbucks, it was five bucks."

Most Chinese schools in Montreal have an additional shared objective, which is to help Chinese immigrant families better integrate into mainstream Canadian society by teaching Western culture and encouraging them to participate in mainstream activities. In Quebec society the Chinese community is often identified as "culturally inassimilable". The common perception is that most Chinese people do not want to learn French or make friends with *Québécois*. To change this impression, efforts have been made by Chinese schools to connect with mainstream communities and to encourage Chinese families to reach out to the larger Quebec society, albeit without giving up their Chinese identity.

7. Summary

In this chapter I investigated the role of the community schools in the family strategies of Chinese families regarding the education of their children. I focused on resources present and identification processes emerging in these schools and related it to the general educational and social position of the pupils.

The educational system is one of the most important cultural apparatuses and means of social-cultural reproduction in a society (Bourdieu, 1990; Hannerz, 1992). Both the educational systems of Flanders and Quebec have been established decades ago by 'representatives' of the majority or dominant group(s). Consequently it is their cultural heritage, including language, religion and other cultural elements that are omnipresent in the education system. Those 'belonging' to minority or immigrant groups are most often absent or rarely touched upon (Reay & Mirza, 1997), yet also for those groups the cultural heritage is crucial to the (re-) construction of their ethnic identity (Eriksen, 2001; Jenkins, 2008). It should thus not come as a surprise that identity formation and in-group bonding processes have play a crucial role in Chinese community schools.

Approaching the Chinese community schools from an identity- or ethnicity - perspective (Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 2008) shows the importance of institutional support for family socialization processes. Chinese schools constitute 'institutional spaces' that are set up to support intergenerational continuity by facilitating the exchange of cultural resources and knowledge between in-group members. As such, they are complementary to the strategies developed by the parents at home and satisfy (educational) needs that are not being addressed by mainstream education in Flanders. Yet the analysis of two major contexts – Flanders and Quebec - also demonstrates that it would be wrong to interpret the explicit attention (as offered in the community schools) towards students' 'original' ethno-cultural identity as a segregation strategy. In both contexts respondents showed a firm orientation towards mainstream society, mostly because this is the place where they aspire to be socially mobile. Although Chinese community schools in Quebec provide more explicit or direct support to children's mainstream school trajectory than those in Flanders, in both contexts Chinese community schooling should primarily be considered as a strategy to build up children's self-esteem and resilience within a diverse world (Hughes et al., 2006).

Community schools are able to enhance the wellbeing of pupils through a positive focus on the ethnic background and cultural heritage. They do not lead to essentialized identities but are rather places where students can experiment with their different (sub)identities. Moreover, the Chinese community schools create a variety of resources that directly or indirectly support pupils' trajectory in mainstream education, i.e. by improving

intergenerational communication, by providing social networks and support and by moulding a bridge for interaction with mainstream society.

Chapter 11

Discussion and final conclusions

This dissertation set out to examine the complex ways in which Chinese families develop and negotiate strategies for education as well as its impact on the socioeducational integration of first and second generation Chinese youngsters in Flanders. Unlike much other research, this study did not focus on educational output as such, but instead aimed for a more holistic exploration of Chinese families' daily life experiences and their concomitant aspirations, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors with respect to the broad field of education. The main purpose of this final chapter is to give a succinct overview of the dissertation, to review and discuss the main research findings as well as to highlight its theoretical and empirical research contributions. Following the review and discussion, this chapter zooms in on the study's major strengths and limitations. Finally, policy recommendations are discussed as well as some potential avenues for future research.

1. Structure of the research

Social inequality and unequal outcomes in education are a tenacious problem in Flanders, as in various other European countries. Despite governmental efforts to democratize the education system and foster academic success of all children, students with a migration background still experience more disadvantages and barriers to learning than their native counterparts (Duquet et al., 2006; Hirtt et al., 2007; Nicaise, 2008; Van den Branden et al., 2011; VLOR, 2013). Given the vast presence and even growing number of immigrant students in Flemish mainstream educational institutions this ethno-stratification is problematic and warrants continued political as well as scholarly attention. Among this vast group of immigrant youngsters, however, the Asians, including the Chinese, have internationally been designated as 'success stories' of economic and educational integration and mobility despite of socioeconomic and cultural differences (Chao, 1996; Francis & Archer, 2005; Kao, 1995; Song & Wang, 2004; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Quantitative data from the *Bet You!* Project in Flanders revealed that despite their quite unfavorable socio-economic profile and cultural differences, Asian immigrant youngsters are indeed educationally outperforming other

immigrant groups and even their native peers (Clycq et al., 2014). Although in various Western countries abundant research exists on Chinese immigrants' educational position and integration patterns, there is a clear lack of current knowledge regarding the contemporary socio-educational situation of the Chinese in Flanders. Research in Flanders generally focuses on the troubled societal and educational position of the larger and more problematized immigrant groups and thus on immigrant students' needs and barriers to learning. In contrast, little attention is paid to more successful trajectories of immigrant youngsters, including those of the Chinese, and the roots of their successfulness. In addition, whereas one of the main aspects commonly considered being prerequisite to children's learning and development is the notion of parent or family involvement (Epstein, 2011; Ho & Kwong, 2013; Menheere & Hooghe, 2010; Morreel et al., 2012; VLOR, 2011), most studies on parental involvement, appear to analyze it mainly from the schools' perspective and as such disregard the complex realities in which immigrant families give meaning to children's education (Morreel et al., 2012). Furthermore, it was shown that most of these studies, as well as those on Chinese immigrant families in general, rarely take children's perspectives and agency into account (Lay-Clayton, 2014). Hence, the argument for this longitudinal study was for a more holistic and in-depth understanding of the different ways in which Chinese families in Flanders – which includes the children - develop, negotiate and employ different strategies for education. The central research question was formulated as:

How are family strategies centred on education constituted and negotiated by Chinese immigrant families in Flanders in relation to the host society and its educational system as well as in relation to the own ethnic community?

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical frame, which was based on an extensive literature review of various factors influencing the academic achievement of immigrant students. Adjoining it, this chapter included a discussion on the model minority paradigm as well as on the different mechanisms at work in ethno-cultural identification processes. The theoretical framework enabled me to view Chinese family strategies for education from a variety of distinct angles and allowed for a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the empirical data. Chapter 3 and 4 offered a closer look at the Chinese migration to Belgium, contextualized it in the broader Chinese diaspora, and included a succinct historic overview of the contemporary education policies in China and Hong Kong. Following the central research question, as well as following but also preceding the theoretical framework, a qualitative

research methodology was designed and by times re-examined, which included a variety of ethnographic data collection methods. In exploring the complexity of Chinese family strategies for education, ethnographic data was collected on a total of twenty-six pupils and their nuclear families in Antwerp and Ghent, coupled with empirical data emanating from interviews with other significant stakeholders, over a four-year-period (2009-2013).

The empirical data analyzed and discussed in chapter 6 to 10 were aimed at responding to the central research question. Chapter 6 provided a detailed background to the migration histories of the Chinese families involved and zoomed in on the families' socio-demographic features. Thereupon a glance was cast on the role of religion and Chinese religious institutions in Chinese families' socioeducational integration. Secondly, chapter 7 investigated the purposes and causes of families' ambitions for the future and the entanglement of those ambitions with the broader and multiple subsystems and levels of social life (Berkovich, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Van der Linden & Klaassen, 1991). Chapter 8 examined the parental involvement of Chinese parents in children's schooling, thereby uncovering the emic perspective on the plurality of praxes in the given families. Chapter 9 then provided an overview of the Chinese family strategies regarding afterschool time use, by which the importance of a musical education as well as youngsters' involvement in the ethnic family business were highlighted. Finally, from a comparative perspective, chapter 10 shed light on the role of Chinese community schools in the socioeducational positioning and integration of Chinese families in Flanders and Quebec.

Proceeding from Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological framework and its focus on interacting environmental systems in which individuals are living, this ethnography sought to develop a broader understanding of the prevalent Chinese family strategies for education. Departing from an emic perspective, it set out to succinctly identify individual variables as well as cultural, socio-economic, historic and political conditions and concomitant identity negotiation processes that determined the development, maintenance and negotiation of such strategies. Its aim was to uncover the roots of the Chinese pupils' and parents' beliefs, attitudes and behavioral patterns in relation to education, thereby departing from a subject-oriented approach and treating the respondents as active agents in the construction of education strategies. In general, the findings revealed interesting similarities and differences among the Chinese immigrant families in Flanders and offer new insights into the construction, negotiation, and interplay of different Chinese educational strategies in relation

to the complex aggregate of local and transnational socio-ecological fields.

2. Major findings: theoretical and empirical contributions

In order to provide a broad and in-depth understanding of the Chinese family strategies for education and the socioeducational integration of Chinese youth in Flanders, this dissertation examined a wide variety of influential and interconnected factors. In chapter 2 the central research question was deconstructed into a set of more specific subquestions and Part II of this dissertation provided an analysis and discussion of these subquestions through an exploration of the empirical data. In the following section, the summarized answers to these subquestions will be positioned within the existing body of socioeducational theory and knowledge on the factors influencing the school careers of immigrant youngsters, in particularly those of Chinese immigrant pupils in a Western context. Yet, as the subquestions are inherently interlinked, they will not be dealt with separately, but instead will be compiled into different overlapping themes.

2.1. Conceptualization of success and ambitions for the future

Internationally, scholars have argued that future aspirations and expectations significantly impact the educational attainment of children (Hirtt et al., 2007; Li, 2001a; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Ogbu, 1990; Terwel et al., 2011). It is stated that the extent to which families value educational success leads to certain attitudes towards schooling and affects pupils' motivation and educational behavior (Hirtt et al., 2007; Ogbu, 1990). Moreover, previous research demonstrated that the difference in performance in high and low achievers is at least part in due to the discrepancy in their definition of achievement (Salili & Mak, 1988). An in-depth analysis of the Chinese respondents' definitions of a successful life revealed that those contained three main elements: an (upper) middle-class lifestyle, a stable family, and success in education. The latter was considered prerequisite for reaching the two other life goals. Irrespective of their socioeconomic background, all Chinese respondents in this study expressed a high regard for education from a deep and abiding belief that it is the crucial avenue for upward social mobility and a stable family life, which coincides with the findings of other international studies on Asian immigrant families (Chao, 1996; Hardway &

Fuligni, 2006; Li, 2001a; Xiong, 2007). In addition, both Chinese students and pupils related explanations for educational success or failure to meritocratic principles. In line with most academic literature, respondents emphasized the role of Chinese cultural heritage, particularly Confucian philosophy, as the source of this education-oriented and meritocratic ideology. Taking much pride in it, this constituted a significant symbolic marker of their Chineseness. Concomitant to other scholarly findings (Chai & Cheng, 2011; Dronkers & Heus, 2010; Hwang, 2014; Yen, 2014), I argue that the roots of the ideology of social mobility through education can indeed be traced back to China's pre-Qin meritocratic ladder structure, which posits that someone's social position in society is not based on that person's inherited status, but on individual merit, which includes competences and above all perseverance. This structure is also still very much alive and even being revitalized in contemporary China and Hong Kong.

The meritocratic ideal is, however, not unique to the Chinese, given the plethora of similar findings with other ethnic minority groups in the west, including Flanders (Clycq et al, 2014; Coleman, 1966; Hermans, 1995; Mickelson, 1990; Ogbu, 1978; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Moreover, also the Flemish education system in itself is stated to be very meritocratic in nature (Nouwen & Vandenbroucke, 2014). Therefore, as meritocratic attitudes with minority groups cannot sufficiently explain pupils' educational outcomes, different authors have argued in favor of a distinction between 'aspirations' and 'expectations' (Kirk et al., 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) or 'abstract' versus 'concrete' attitudes (Mickelson, 1990) in order to resolve this attitude-achievement paradox. The first two of these notions relate to what people subjectively desire to happen and reflect the dominant meritocratic ideology, while the second set of notions refer to more realistic views on what people suppose will happen based on their concrete experiences with existing opportunity structures in the host society. Whereas with other ethnic minorities there often exists a clear gap between the two (Hermans, 1995; Kirk et al, 2011; Mickelson, 1990), this discrepancy was found to be rather small with the Chinese respondents in this study, which coincides with the findings of Portes & Rumbaut (2006) regarding the ambitions of Chinese-Americans. I argue that the 'community forces' (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) within the Chinese community in Flanders and beyond, convey the general message of actual returns on educational efforts. Although the majority of parents belonging to the first generations were mainly restricted to niche manual occupations, the second generation is now indeed able to compete for jobs for which they are actually qualified, as they enter white-collar and middle-class jobs. As such, the Chinese

families in this study perceived the 'opportunity structure' differently from many other minority groups in Flanders, and therefore put much effort and commitment into education. Building on the instrumental upward-mobility frame of reference, Chinese families highly stressed the importance of higher education credentials in view of valuable employment positions.

Nevertheless, although both parents and pupils in this study were clearly optimistic about the future, to some extent they also expressed a concern with an 'ethnic glass ceiling' (Cheng, 2012; Crul et al., 2013), albeit mostly in relation to key managerial or top positions. Apart from that, various parents also justified their emphasis on prestigious diplomas and jobs by conveying that, even as a model minority, they still had to overcompensate in order to attain equal status with their native counterparts. Due to perceived cultural and/or linguistic differences, their phenotypic characteristics, and the ubiquity of the othering-mechanism within the dominant society, they believed that to some extent it was impossible for them to escape their ascribed Chineseness. The research data also suggests that a considerable group of Chinese parents were suffering from 'an inferiority complex'. Due to their lower education levels resulting from structural constraints in the home country and streaming mechanisms in the Flemish educational system, as well as language and structural barriers, the non-recognition of their qualifications or experience, and the ethnic glass ceiling, many parents had felt pushed toward self-employment within the confines of the own ethnic community. As such, the ethnographic data demonstrates that we should not dismiss actual experiences of discrimination and stigmatization faced by Chinese in Flanders, despite their model minority status. Moreover, the experienced or perceived barriers encouraged a certain propensity with respondents towards geographical mobility, which with some parents was being reinforced by the home country's policy of luring back overseas Chinese with attractive salaries and positions. Symbolic or in more concrete ways, national boundaries were not seen as serious obstacles in the development of a (future) professional career (cf. Nyíri & Saveliev, 2002).

2.2. The role of Chinese cultural heritage

Throughout academic literature, the paramount idea is that Asian immigrants' socioeducational success is the result of cultural values, norms and socialization processes within the family that strongly emphasize academic accomplishment and upward social

mobility (Cohen, 1997; Crosnoe, 2010; Dronkers & Heus, 2010; Francis & Archer, 2005; Lau-Clayton, 2014; Li, 2001a; Lu, 2013; Sue & Okazaki, 2009; Qin et al., 2011; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Confucian ethic and collectivist principles as embodied cultural capital and the concomitant nature of parents' involvement in children's schooling are thereby invoked as major explanatory factors for the overall successful school trajectories of Chinese immigrant pupils. Moreover, as shown by Lau-Clayton (2014), it has often been suggested that the migration process itself entrenches traditional regimes further because Chinese parents attempt to maintain their cultural practices overseas as a result of their encounter with a 'culture shock' in the host country. Although, as in most other Western countries, the Chinese in Flanders are far from a homogeneous group in terms of provenance, migration period(s), language spoken, socio-economic and educational background, and economic activity (Baldassar et al., 2015, Benton & Gomez, 2014; Latham & Wu, 2014; Lay-Clayton, 2014; Ma, 2003), the data in this research nevertheless indicate that Confucian offshoots and cultural capital possessed and transmitted by the Chinese immigrant families indeed played a significant role in their goal setting and development and negotiation of family strategies for education.

In line with other scholars (Geense & Pels, 1998; Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Lau-Clayton, 2014; Ong, 1996), I argue that success in education is inherent to the Confucian family ideology, *familialism*, and is encapsulated in the guiding ethics of filial piety (*xiao*) and face (*mianzi*). These require that children obey and are subservient to parents, appreciate social hierarchy and authority, and are committed to perpetuating the family's reputation and honor by giving evidence of success, including educational success. The analysis of this study's ethnographic data shows that these traditional principals have not disappeared among the Chinese diasporans in Flanders, which corresponds to earlier findings regarding the Chinese in the Netherlands (Geense et al., 1999; Pels et al., 2009). The prevalence of these ethics became clear at different moment throughout the research. Firstly, the notion of *familialism* was strongly reflected in respondents' perceptions of the ideal married life as well as in the organizational structure of Chinese ethnic businesses and children's employment in those businesses (Fuligni, 2002; Pang, 2002, 2003b; Song, 1997). Moreover, the data revealed that respondents considered academic achievement as a family matter. Success was not seen as the result of individual merit and effort for the benefit of the individual, but as a collective effort that was also to the credit of the parents and even ancestors. This family-oriented discourse was strongly apparent in the prevailing rhetoric of parental self-sacrifice, which at

times was explicitly conveyed by respondents as a distinguished feature of Chinese parental roles.

In alignment with the general notion of *xiao,* the Chinese parents as well as youngsters considered it a child's duty to perform well in school. Parents were also found to display little open praise in rewarding of school results, which constituted a way for Chinese parents to spur their children onto continuous self-improvement. According to various scholars, the latter is also a basic tenet of Confucianism and inherent to the meritocratic ideology of social mobility (Chao, 1996; Fang, 2000; Watkins, 2009; Yen, 2014). In relation to this Chinese youngsters stated that seeing parents' disappointment in cases of bad school results was often a sufficient punishment. Equally in line with earlier research (Sun, 2013; Woo, 2010; Yang, 1999), I argue that to various Chinese families in Flanders the appeal of Christianity (evangelical Protestantism) partially existed in its perceived congruence with traditional Confucian moral values of family, work and education, including filial piety, perseverance and respect for authority. Especially for those parents who were struggling with intergenerational conflicts within the nuclear family due to children's growing up in a Western culture, the religious boundary-crossing allowed for a re-authorization to take place and as such provided them with the necessary support in parenting.

Another central strategy for parents to foster their children's educational outcomes was through their deployment of yet another Confucian principle that closely relates to that of *xiao*, namely *guan*. In traditional Chinese culture, this concept simultaneously stands for 'discipline' and 'love' (Chao, 1994; Chen, Chen, & Zheng, 2012; Wu, 2011). Many parents in this study considered the acts of asserting control and disciplining their children as important means to achieve desirable values with their children, including *xiao* and obedience. At the same time, they also regarded it as a sign of love and care. Particularly the higher educated, though also various lower educated parents tended to set up a great range of rules and control mechanisms in order for their children to study well. Although differences could be observed in the degree of freedom that parents allowed their children, many asserted control over, for example, children's free time and social networks. Some parents were also found to make use of corporal punishments to discipline their children. However, although many studies suggest that the latter can be predicted in part by heritage cultural values and should be considered the result of Chinese authoritarian parenting, in line with Lau (2010) and Lau-Clayton (2014), I argue that aside from culture also parent-child acculturation conflicts were underlying the use

of this disciplinary method. Finally, this study revealed that the Chinese parents considered themselves and schools as joint partners in children's education and that although they also appreciated some of the more Western-oriented values that were passed onto children in Flemish education, including critical thinking, creativity, and verbal skills, they clearly expected schools to reinforce specific values and norms that largely coincided with the conceptions of *xiao* and *guan*, including obedience, politeness, discipline and respect for authority. This concern played an important role in respondents' selection of specific mainstream schools in Flanders.

To a particular extent, the above analysis of respondents' inherited cultural belief system sheds light on the Chinese family strategies for education. It also partly helps to explain why Chinese parents make it their priority to push their children to study hard and to get high-ranked jobs. Nevertheless, although I agree that families' retention of Chinese cultural traditions and Confucian heritage plays an important role, I argue that cultural explanations do not suffice to qualify the success of Chinese immigrant pupils or the family strategies of the Chinese in Flanders centred on education. Concomitant to more recent research on Chinese immigrant families, I argue that there is a need to 'de-essentialize' the role of Confucian culture because, in contrast to what is commonly believed, immigrant families are not solely bound by cultural traditions (Lau-Clayton, 2014). In other words, the strategies employed by the families definitely not only emerged as a result of their cultural background. In the previous section, I already pointed out that these strategies also constituted pragmatic responses to structural opportunities as well as imperatives, which resulted from the broader opportunity structure (Mickelson, 1990; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Moreover, in line with Lau-Clayton (2014), I argue that it is equally important to take into account the agency of individuals in the formation and negotiation of identities, values, behavior and meanings (Lau-Clayton, 2014).

Living in Flanders, the Chinese families were exposed to different cultural norms and values. Many respondents suggested that this has not only impacted their beliefs, but also certain attitudes and behaviors in different ways and to varying degrees. This was reflected in the way parents and students considered themselves to be Chinese onto a scale of zero to one hundred percent. Various respondents, particularly the Chinese youngsters, suggested that they were also, in various cases even mostly, Western. Also some parents called their children up to 80% Western, something they regretted to some point, but considered inevitable (cf.

Lau-Clayton, 2014). With varying degrees of success, some of the pupils had begun to question specific parenting strategies, attitudes and behaviors. In contrast to many scholarly accounts, data from this study revealed that children reacted to parental control and authority in many different ways, with some accepting it and others engaging in active opposition and open conflict. In some cases the latter even lead to severe intergenerational conflicts within the nuclear family. This indeed proves that we must take Chinese youngsters' agency into account instead of looking upon them as mere 'passive puppets on a Chinese parental string' or 'a cultural string', as is often the case in academic literature as well as with Flemish teachers. At times, intergenerational areas of tension brought about explicit discussions and negotiations between parents and youngsters. Thereby parents were found to adjust their parenting styles to varying degrees, for example with regard to the family work contract, children's extracurricular activities and general free time, choice of friends and study tracks. These findings are at odds with the common depiction of Chinese parents as authoritarian and restrictive towards children's autonomy and individuality. In fact, the respondents' accounts point to a co-existence of both Chinese collectivist and Western individualist orientations, by which the latter included acceptation as well as stimulation of children's autonomy and self-realization. From this study, it has become clear that the Chinese youngsters in Flanders were not only 'trained' to bear responsibility for the family and their educational and professional future, but also to become more independent and to fully engage in Flemish society.

Furthermore, I argue that the focus with Chinese families on educational success as a cultural marker and the importance attached to *xiao* and *mianzi* is, however, also being revitalized to some point, not only by the transnational Chinese ethnoscape and its concomitant 'imagined biographies' (Appadurai, 1996), but also by the prevailing model minority paradigm and the power of *mianzi,* which included a constant social comparison with other Chinese families in terms of educational success in Flanders and beyond. In sum, all these processes indicate the complex nature of Chinese family strategies and show that these strategies need to be seen as the result of an interactive process.

2.3. Socio-economic status

Within socioeducational literature, the socio-economic status (SES) of the family is often stated to be one of the most significant explanatory factors in school failure or success

of children in general, and immigrant children in particular (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Clycq et al., 2014; Coleman, 1966; Hirtt et al., 2007; Hustinx & Meijnen, 2001; Levels, Kraaykamp, & Dronkers, 2008; Meijnen, Rupp, & Veld, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut 2001, 2006). However, in discordance with this general theory, the model minority paradigm puts forward that Chinese immigrants, regardless of their socio-economic background, are nonetheless able to display great economic mobility and excellence in academics (Chao, 1996; Li, 2001a; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Song & Wang, 2004). As discussed in chapter 6, with regard to socio-economic status, the Chinese community in Flanders constitutes a very heterogeneous group, including families that came from poorer working-class origins as well as middle-income backgrounds. Recent survey data suggests that – at the group level – Chinese youngsters in Flanders are indeed are able to surpass the well-known achievement gap, despite considerable numbers of them belonging to lower SES families. Unlike many other immigrant youngsters of low-educated parents who are much more likely to end up in the vocational track (BSO) by the fourth year of secondary education (Hirtt et al., 2007), the Chinese are overrepresented in the general track (ASO) (Clycq et al., 2014).

As the research sample in this study is rather small, unfortunately it does not allow for a full examination of the role of the SES factor in Chinese youngsters' school trajectories. Some significant observations can, however, be brought to the fore. First of all, it is important to bear in mind the distinction between situational poverty and generational poverty (Sun, 2013). Whereas the first represents a temporary state caused by specific circumstances (e.g. political turmoil in the country of origin, sudden unemployment, migration, illness…), the latter implies a situation of poverty that endures for two or more generations and is believed to have a much larger impact on children's academic outcomes in a migration context. In chapter 6, it was shown that various Chinese parents in this study, who grew up in China in the 1960s and 1970s, originated from higher SES families but had undergone downward social mobility as a result of the Cultural Revolution in China and/or their migration to Belgium. As such, their low socioeconomic status should be considered more as a temporary state and as such function differently in relation to their children's education than with other minority groups in Flanders. Other Chinese immigrant parents held diplomas of higher education from their home countries and came from families who were financially relatively well-off. However, the self-selective immigration hypothesis (Crosnoe, 2010) still does not explain why a considerable number of Chinese immigrant children coming from families with long-term lower SES-levels are also found to have significantly high academic performance

and overall attainment (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Despite the small sample, I argue that the non-conflictual relationship of these families with the host society based on a perceived congruence between home and school culture – which is also partly due to the model minority paradigm, as I will show in the next section – supports them to overcome the otherwise well-known structural impediments in the education system. To a large extent, the Chinese families and Flemish mainstream schools considered each other's values and norms to be congruent and legitimate, which might have created better chances for Chinese immigrant children to reach educational success (Morreel et al., 2012)

Although many similarities could be found in the strategies for education between lower and higher SES families, there were also some differences that are worth mentioning. For example, due to the nature of lower SES parents' professional activities in manual labor, for some their actual possibilities to exert control over children were rather limited. These parents had to count on a great deal of self-discipline with their children, which at times created difficulties with children, especially with those experiencing a more troubled school trajectory. Moreover, as a result of limitations in cultural capital with some parents - not speaking Dutch and being low educated – not all of them could offer direct support to their children with respect to school tasks or learning strategies. In those cases, they counted on youngsters' ability to overcome problems by working hard(er) or they turned to elder siblings, teachers and private tuition. However, the latter also occurred in cases where there were no learning problems with children, which accords with the growing attention for cram schooling in the Asia-Pacific region.

2.4. Implications of the model minority paradigm

As stated before, in many Western countries the Chinese have been designated as 'success stories' of economic and educational integration and mobility (Chao, 1996; Francis & Archer, 2005; Li, 2001a; Modood, 2004; Rijkschroeff, 1998). Regardless of their socioeconomic background, Chinese immigrant youngsters appear to surpass the existing achievement gap between native and immigrant children or even reach excellence in academics, thereby outperforming their native counterparts (Lay-Clayton, 2014; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Song & Wang, 2004; Yoon, 2012). Moreover, many Chinese diasporans have managed to fulfill the meritocratic ideal by gaining relative financial welfare and

improving their social position despite being confronted with discrimination and arrears in their host countries, including Flanders (Li, 2001a; McGowan & Lindgren, 2006; Pang, 2007b). As a result of this prosperity, the Chinese have often been referred to as a model minority, which lead to a prevailing model minority *paradigm* in various Western countries. With it the Chinese, including Chinese immigrant students, are being ascribed all kinds of positive traits, as for example hard-working, non-troublesome, uncomplaining, diligent, disciplined, polite, studious, and obedient. Although the Belgian-Chinese have mostly remained invisible throughout the migration debate, this study has demonstrated that the paradigm likewise has his offshoots in Flemish society.

Triangulated fieldwork data has given evidence of an overall positive view of Chinese pupils with teachers and other school personnel in the focus schools, by which the latter discursively pointed to what they called the 'exemplary' or 'model' behavior and attitudes of Chinese pupils. Similarly, the public pronouncement of the Flemish N-VA chairman, Bart De Wever, in March 2015 and the subsequent reactions by Flemish citizens gave away an endorsement of the model minority paradigm. Likewise, in the aftermath of the *frietchinees* phenomenon, Flemish public media emphasized the fantastic integration of Chinese immigrants. A leitmotiv punctuating these discourse, is the idea that Chinese immigrants are not only able, but foremost *willing* to adapt to the realities of their new societal environment. As such they are ascribed a position in opposition to other minority groups in Flanders who are often being depicted as *not willing* to integrate. In chapter 2 the subquestion was raised if and to what extent the Chinese respondents themselves endorsed the model minority paradigm and what the consequences were of such endorsement. The empirical data from this research shows that the Chinese parents and students were acquainted with the mainly positive image of the Chinese in Flanders and that they indeed subscribed to the paradigm in different ways and to varying degrees. From the realization of that positive image and the fact that their cultural features were appreciated by the dominant society and thus competitive, the Chinese parents and students used their Chinese identity as an important weapon within the societal competition. For example, to avoid losing face in case of perceived educational failure, some students were inclined to subscribe to the transnational identity of the successful Chinese immigrant, so to the model minority paradigm, by expressing elevated educational aspirations. The imagery of renowned international studies abroad temporarily helped them to reconfirm their identity as successful Chinese students. Also by stimulating children to engage in a musical education, Chinese immigrant parents participated in a discursive re-

construction of their ethnic identity in relation to a broader Chinese ethnoscape, but also vis-à-vis the dominant society. Classcial music became an elite and prestigious form of cultural capital, which lead to social prestige.

At different times, the respondents in this study placed being Chinese' in opposition to other minorities, and in some cases even vis-à-vis the 'Western Others'. Qualities as 'diligence', 'self-sacrifice', 'valueing education' were presented as cultural traits and set opposed to 'freedom' and 'lack of discipline'. Various respondents did so by firmly contrasting their own beliefs, attitudes and behavior with those of Muslim communities in Flanders whose general integration has been strongly problematized over the past forty years. These parents and children compared the Chinese parental and educational strategies to those of Moroccan and Turkish parents, whom in their opinion did not attach great importance to children's education. Following the instrumental perspective on ethnicity (Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 2001; Turner & Reynolds, 2001), I argue that the respondents distanced themselves from the Islamic minorities in Flanders by installing a clear ethnic boundary. This boundary setting was also externalized in parent's selection of a suitable partner for their child and in their (dis) approval of particular schools and peers. As such they distanced themselves from the structures of racism and stigmatisation. It clearly mirrors the dynamic construction of an ethnic identity on the basis of boundaries or opposition to others by which specific cultural traits were deployed and revitalized as markers of cultural difference.

Various parents hoped that Chinese community schooling and participation in evangelical Protestantism could be used as a means to reinforce what they believed to be traditional Chinese values, such as loyalty to one's family and obedience to authority. Although, for example, the Chinese teachers at the community schools as well as the parents recognized that the schools might only be partially successful in this regard, significant is the way in which these respondents participated in a discursive (re)construction of their Chinese identity. They argued that Chinese pupils behaved as they did in mainstream Flemish schools "because they were Chinese", mirroring a clear interplay of processes of self- and other-ascription by which specific values and concomitant behavioural patterns were used as markers of cultural difference (Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 2001; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). As Francis et al. (2010) has put it, such pupils encounter, a "demand for production of symmetry between body and identity". This could explain why Chinese pupils tend to act 'more Chinese' at their mainstream schools than they actually do in their own ethnic institutions, where pupils were

allowed a relatively 'free' and 'loose' conduct. Unlike many other immigrant or minority groups who suffer from situations of dichotomization and stigmatization by the dominant society (Eriksen, 2001), the Chinese respondents in this research largely applied the same criteria for ethnic self-ascription than those used by different actors in Flemish society to ascribe an ethnic identity to the Chinese (Guibernau & Rex, 1994). This shows that we should not ignore the relatedness of the construction of the Chinese identity with the general expectations within dominant society and among Western teachers, in particular with regards to Chineseness.

Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, the model minority paradigm carries with it some significant pitfalls. First of all, we must guard not to lump all Chinese immigrants together. Instead attention should be paid to less prosperous trajectories with Chinese families as well. In addition, one should not take the meritocratic ideal for granted and turn a blind eye to Chinese immigrants' potential confrontation with discriminatory practices in mainstream Flemish society, including the labour market and education system. The data in this study warrants for a too rigid ethniticzation of socioeducational success and failre. Furthermore, the paradigm's potential danger of creating inter-ethnical disparities within the broader society should not be ignored.

3. Strengths and limitations of the research

3.1. My own position as a researcher

Ethnographic researchers who study certain social phenomena always move between their positions in an academic field of research and the field(s) made up by the subjects under research (Chan, 2013). Both fields impact upon the creation of knowledge in distinct ways. As a researcher at the Social and Cultural Anthropology department of the KULeuven and co-researcher within the broader *Bet You!* Study, I have drawn upon specific academic knowledge and research techniques to make sense of my subjects' social fields, and their concomitant norms and values, actions and discourses and tacit and explicit knowledge. However, at the same time, by observing, questioning, interacting with and interpreting what the Chinese respondents in Flanders said and observed, they most often co-created the knowledge alongside with me as a researcher (cf. Chan, 2013). This is in line with the study's

epistemological position of social constructionism, which emphasizes the subjective meaning of social action and knowledge (Wu, 2011).

Of course, ethnographic researchers can vary in the degree of their immersion in the field of study. They can range from being fairly detached observers to complete participants (Chan, 2013; Manning, 2009). 'Complete participants' fully become embroiled in the social worlds they study; they employ a kind of 'auto-ethnography' and in that sense, become their own informants (Manning, 2009). Manning (2009) refers to this position as 'transferential ethnography', by which the ethnographer experiences the excitement and anticipation of a given social world as an insider. To date, the notion of fieldwork is indeed often associated with the idea of undertaking an immersive and prolonged engagement with the community under research (Kozinets, 2010). This links to the fact that, for a long time, anthropological fieldwork was primarily associated with an intensive long-term stay in a geographically localised setting (Rutten, 2007), the latter being characterised by both cultural and geographic distance that separates the researcher from the researched group (Peirano, 1998). As such, the idea of anthropology at home was long considered a 'paradox' because of its move away from the classical search for alterity (Peirano, 1998). However, already since the early 1960s, fieldwork in the anthropologist's own society has become much more common (Eriksen, 2001). Particularly the current globalization trends have contributed to shrinking spatial distances and blurred boundaries between cultures, which has made it impossible to posit sharp distinctions between 'us' and 'them'.

For this study, I did not travel to a 'remote field site' - apart from the rather brief fieldtrips to China and Canada - nor did I live among the people I studied. To a large extent I was tied to the research design of the *Bet You!* Project, and having a family of my own, I could not just put my personal life on hold and leave. In view of the postulated data gathering, I nevertheless participated in various events and activities organized by and for the Chinese community in Flanders, as for example Chinese classes at the community schools of Ghent, Antwerp and Montreal, Chinese New Year festivities, the twentieth anniversary of the Chinese school in Antwerp, Chinese Protestant masses, and so on. I also took part in teacher meetings and deliberations at the focus schools, and spend time – albeit limited - in the families' houses, for example when I joined them for lunch or diner after conducting an interview. During my field visit in China, I have also travelled alongside a limited number of families, by which I attached importance to participate in whatever activity they were up to

for that day. However, despite these efforts, to a large extent, I nevertheless remained an ethnographer visiting my field rather than living in it. Therefore, participant observation was occasionally more inclusive to interviewing than it was a complement to it, particularly during my fieldwork in Flanders. In view of the profundity and validity of my data, I sometimes wished I could participate more in the daily lives of my participants and as such downplay "the role of the aloof observer" (Wolcott, 1995, p. 100).

Manning (2009) refers to this ethnographic position as 'the observer as participant', which according to him is typical of the 'consensus model of ethnography'. This consensus model involves three main aspects: an acceptance of the assumptions of symbolic interactionism (cf. Blumer); a set of data-collection techniques based on long-term observations and other methods; and the ethnographer as 'observer as participant', that is as an outsider with detailed knowledge of a group's practices (Manning, 2009). According to Manning, this consensus model is a successful approach in its own right that works with and within its own limitations. One the one hand, the longitudinal design of the research not only allowed for continuity in the relationship with my respondents (Qin, 2009), but also facilitated the acquirement of a more 'thick' understanding of my informants' social worlds. According to Wolcott, fieldwork does not always require residency on the part of the researcher, "if [indeed] sufficient time is allowed for research in depth" (Wolcott, 2009, p. 105). On the other hand, one of the main limitations of this study is that I might not have been entirely able to grasp "the full range of backstage activities", as Manning calls it (2009, p. 766). 'Visiting my field' from my positionality as a researcher, young women, student, and especially as a non-Chinese with only very limited knowledge of any of the Chinese languages, I clearly remained an outsider. Various scholars have particularly pointed to the necessity of ethnographers to study the native language (Gottlieb, 2006; Marcus, 1995; Spradley, 1979). Although I invested much time in learning Mandarin, my proficiency remained too limited to conduct interviews in the language. Moreover, nearly half of the respondents had roots in Hong Kong, which caused even more difficulties to meet the conventional call for mastering the subjects' native language. However, most of my pupil respondents were second generation, which means that most parents had also been living in Flanders for quite some time and had sufficient knowledge of Dutch or English to engage in sufficiently profound conversations with me as a researcher. Resulting from their long-term stay in Flanders, many of them had acquired an ability, which Spradley (1979) calls the 'translation competence', to translate the meanings of cultural-specific terms into forms that were comprehensible to me.

If that was not the case, for example with newcomers, I engaged their children as interpreters or asked respondents to use their own wording in their own native language, which I then had translated afterwards, either by other Chinese respondents or by acquaintances who had studied Sinology and as such were familiar not only with the Chinese language but also with Chinese culture.

Another element that has helped me to overcome the limitations described above was the triangulation of a broad variety of methods, resources and theories. This will be described in the next part of this chapter.

3.2. Issues of validity and reliability

In this section, I briefly focus on the validity and reliability of the ethnographic account as a methodological issue. Conventional criteria for reliability and validity generally derive from positivism and the requirements for experimental research (Schensul, Schensul & Lecompte, 1999). Within this research tradition, reliability is about consistency (Wu, 2011) and is defined as "the stability of research results and their ability to be replicated by other researchers" (Schensul et al., 1999, p. 271) "or the same researcher at another place or another time" (Hammersley, 1992, cited in Wu, 2011). Validity, in turn, refers to the accuracy of the study findings (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) and measures two aspects: 1/ "whether researchers have discovered what they claim to have found", and 2/ "the extent to which what they have learned can be applied to other populations" (Schensul et al., 1999, p. 271). The dominance of these positivist criteria have installed a false assumption that qualitative research, ethnographic accounts in particular, are less reliable and lack in validity and reliability (Chan, 2013; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

It is however clear that both research traditions have distinct characteristics, and thus need different approaches to validity and reliability. First of all, they differ in the formulation of the research problem and delineation of the content area. Whereas experimental research tries to eliminate as many extraneous and contextual factors as possible, this study, as any ethnographic research, conversely focused on the interplay between different variables and the natural flow of human events over time (Schensul et al., 1999). Secondly, whereas experimental researchers are oriented towards the verification of

causal propositions, ethnographers commonly avoid assuming a priori constructs or causal propositions. That is why this research did not depart from a delineated set of research hypotheses, but rather developed the theoretical framework along the way, based on the specific data retrieved from the field setting. Thirdly, whereas positivist research is oriented toward generalization of research findings, ethnographers focus much more on comparability and translatability. Fourthly, within anthropological research, the researcher is always the primary instrument of data collection, which means that the data collection and the analysis and interpretation of results are always filtered through the perceptual apparatus of the researcher (Schensul et al., 1999). However, regardless of this difference in theoretical paradigms, issues of validity and credibility cannot be dismissed (Chan, 2013).

A first way to ensure validity has been to tape record and transcribe all of the interviews. This allowed me to regularly re-view the large amount of interview data, which proved useful and necessary in cases when new perspectives and questions popped up. Secondly, although the value of triangulation to ensure validity and credibility in qualitative research has been rather controversial over the past 30 years - as it got caught in a thorough academic paradigm war (Denzin, 2010) -, various authors have nonetheless reaffirmed its usefulness to produce an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and to enhance validity and authenticity in ethnographic research (Chan, 2013; Denzin, 2010; Schensul et al., 1999). Denzin (1978, 2010) and Patton (1999) distinguish four types of triangulation[1], of which I have applied three throughout the research. The first form of triangulation that I made use of was the so-called 'method triangulation'. For reasons of validity and credibility I have combined different qualitative data collection methods, including interviewing, participant observation, group discussions, TAT, interpretation of media and political documents, as well as the vignette method. In line with this, Hobbs, defined ethnography to be "a cocktail of methodologies" in which "participant observation is the most common component […], but interviews, conversational and discourse analysis, documentary analysis, film and photography all have their place" (in Kozinets, 2010, p. 59). In agreement with this definition, Kozinets states that ethnography is an "inherently assimilative practice", meaning that it is "interlinked with multiple methods" (2010, p. 59). In addition, I employed a triangulation of data sources at different points in time, by which I have compared the time bound perspectives of different people, including pupils, parents, school staff of mainstream and community schools, peers, and religious spokesmen/women. All these sources were able to provide information on the different dimensions and levels included in the broader research

question. This type of triangulation coincides with Howe's alternative democratic framework, which he called 'mixed methods interpretivism'. This framework emphasizes the principles of inclusion and dialogue by engaging all relevant stakeholders with the aim to understand them on their own terms (Denzin, 2010). Thirdly, I have made use of a theory/perspective triangulation, which means that I have build upon multiple theoretical perspectives to analyse and interpret the data. I argue that this use of multiple methods, data sources and theories support the trustworthiness and authenticity of this ethnographic account and as such validate the academic value of my findings. In sum, I argue that the triangulation and the study's longitudinal character have provided a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the development and negotiation of Chinese family strategies for education than ever realized in Flanders before.

This study of Chinese family strategies for education is written from a particular epistemological stance as well as particular theoretical underpinnings. In order to address the complexity and ambiguity of the families' lives and experiences whose social positions transcend multiple fields, this study focused on examining the interplay of different variables, such as culture, socioeconomic position, migration background, and ethnicity. Although the socio-ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) constituted an appropriate model to help demarcate the study and to identify the complex range of independent and interacting factors at different levels that might influence the development and negotiation of Chinese family strategies for education, it still presents a heuristic model. Based on the socio-ecological framework, this study canvasses a broad range of issues related to Chinese family strategies for education and youngsters' socioeducational integration in Flemish society. While its breadth can be considered a strength, it is also potentially a limitation in the sense that various of the issues discussed are worth an even more in-depth study (Wu, 2011). This will be discussed in the next section on 'avenues for future research'. However, as for Wu (2011) who studied a group of Chinese skilled migrant mother' experiences and strategies in relation to their children's early childhood care and education in New Zealand, because of the breadth of my approach, I was able to depict and capture much of the complexity of the respondents' daily experiences with regard to education. I believe that qualitative studies like this one, based on in-depth interviews and observations, generate good accounts of Chinese families' practices and strategies and their understanding fo those practices and strategies.

4. Policy recommendations

"Educational change can lead to social change"
(Berkovich, 2014)

Within the KULeuven Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, it is not common practice to complete an ethnographic dissertation with policy recommendations and hence I initially refrained myself from doing so. Nonetheless, for a variety of reasons I decided to deviate from this common mode. Not only was I encouraged to this end by the members of the research committee, also other reasons have eventually led to this decision. For three and a half years (2009-2012), I was lucky to be part of the interdisciplinary Strategic Basic Research Project (SBO) *Bet You!*[2] (cf. Clycq, Timmerman, Van Avermaet, Wets, & Hermans, 2014). Due to the nature of this research, it was not only its aim to approach and frame diversity in education in a holistic manner, but also to propose solutions and formulate policy recommendations. In addition, for the past two years I have been working for the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB) in Vietnam whose main objective is to sustainably improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the local education system. To that aim VVOB Vietnam focuses strongly on the issues of barriers to learning, inclusiveness and equity. Through my work with VVOB I came to realize even more that academic research and societal change can and should go hand in hand. Academic studies are not intended to disappear in the basement archives of the university, although due to a prevailing divide in Flanders between research, policy and practice, they unfortunately often still do. Moreover, it is often stated that education mirrors society and that social change generates educational change. However, in line with Berkovich (2014) I believe that the converse is also true, namely that educational change can generate social change. So, for those reasons I wish to bring forward the following policy recommendations.

Today Flanders is facing increasing social inequality and poverty as well as a growing intolerance regarding diversity. Recently, the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), showed that Flemish students only scored average for social and democratic attitudes in comparison to other European countries, and more importantly they scored absolutely negative for attitudes towards the multicultural society and immigrants (Kerr, Sturman, Schultz & Burge, 2010). Therefore, in order to respond to the challenges of

diversity in education, especially within the context of Flanders that is increasingly characterized by "super diversity" (Crul, Schneider & Lelie, 2013), policy makers and educational stakeholders should really embrace diversity and take value from it (Banks, 1998; Berkovich, 2014; Van Avermaet, 2013; Van Avermaet & Sierens, 2012). This means that they should go beyond the image of diversity as a deviation from the norm and thus a problem. This means they should go beyond the recognition of diversity only as a step towards assimilation. To that aim they will need to smooth over the prevailing deficiency model in education, as it undoubtly keeps generating mechanisms of stigmatization and exclusion. Schools need to learn how to deal with diversity in a positive way, by which cultural and language differences are not represented as the causes of arrear, but rather as assets for learning. Teachers' and school leaders' endorsement of the model minority paradigm vis-à-vis Chinese students and the concomitant Rosenthal effect show us that school staff in Flemish education sometimes applies different standards to evaluate the impact of the mother tongue and home culture on immigrant youngsters' educational attainment, depending on students' ethnic background. Although most teachers mean well and clearly want what's best for all their students, they often unconsciously hold onto existing prejudices and lack the necessary tools to deal with diversity in more positive ways. This poses significant challenges to pre- and in-service professional development of teachers in Flanders, which in the first place will need to focus on capacitating teachers to teach *in* diversity rather than *on* diversity. By reforming pre- and in-service training, teachers will need to be offered more mechanisms and more tools to mitigate immigrant children's barriers to learning – not in the least those induced by teachers themselves or the structure of the school system - and to offer equal opportunities to all students, regardless of their ethnicity, economic or socio-cultural background. A good example of such effort was recently offered during a seminar in Flanders, by which one of the University Colleges from Antwerp presented its new initiative of a 4-year trajectory for teacher trainers on 'teaching in a super-diverse context'. Although this should be considered as yet the beginning, it nevertheless shows the need for a more critical reflection within the education system itself.

Secondly, a common assumption is that schools can act as isolated islands, independent from their environment. It is therefore often believed that social justice actions should only be directed at altering schools' practices and culture, which include prevalent bias and prejudice with school staff and students (Berkovich, 2014). Although in the first policy recommendation I state that such actions are admirable and needed, I argue that we also need

to take into account the ongoing interactions between and interdependence of multiple systems and levels in society, as also advocated by the socio-ecological paradigm (Berkovich, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). This study also speficially pointed to the importance of Chinese community schools and Chinese religious institutions for the socioeducational integration of Chinese families in Flanders. To varying degrees, both types of community-based institutions constituted an important scaffold between repondents' need for ethnic-cultural preservation on the one hand and acceptance of or integration in mainstream society on the other hand. I therefore advocate for Flemish policy makers and educational leaders to exploit these institutions' mediating role and potential as a means to engage and interact with new and older migrant groups. In order to bridge social capital and to promote socio-cultural exchange among different 'ethnic' and 'socio-cultural' groups in society, partnerships should be promoted between Flemish mainstream schools and suchlike community-based organizations or institutions (Zhou & Li 2003, Zhou & Kim 2006).

5. Avenues for future research

As mentioned above, the results and contributions of this research should be considered in the light of a number of limitations. Despite this study's in-depth analysis and its breadth, as outlined above, not all aspects relevant to the analysis of Chinese family strategies for education could be discussed or analysed within the same depth. Therefore in this section I would like to provide some suggestions for future research efforts.

Firstly, in spite of my initial aim to include an equal number of pupils from each education form (ASO, TSO, BSO), the majority of pupils in the total student sample were nevertheless enrolled in the general education track (ASO). Although this reflects in considerable measure the broader reality of Chinese pupils in Flemish secondary education, to do true justice to the great complexity of Chinese youngsters' socioeducational integration and the factors that influence families' strategies for education, the student sample should have included more pupils from the technical and vocational disciplines as well. Although this research mainly focused on the reasons for Chinese youngsters' educational success and not so many differences could be found between lower and higher SES families, I think it is reasonable to argue that not all Chinese youngsters are reaching the model minority standard, as was also shown by Sun (2013) in her study on the educational experience of Chinese

students in Quebec. This is not to say that Chinese youngsters enrolled in vocational education are by definition less successful. It would however be most relevant to analyse whether similar or other mechanisms are at the basis of their educational performance in comparison to those at work with other minority youngsters, and whether their family strategies for education differ substantially from those of the more successful Chinese youngsters or other less successful minority pupils.

A second potential avenue for future research consists of an in-depth analysis of the impact of transnational parenting on immigrant youngsters' wellbeing and socioeducational integration. Given the growing number of families with temporary or permanent transnational parenting arrangements, more attention from social scientists regarding this phenomenon is recommended. After all, many important questions remain. How do the different parties involved negotiate the care obligations and expectations, and how do they remain their sense of connectivity across time and distance (Baldassar, Baldock, & Wilding, 2007)? What are the economical and/or socio-cultural underpinnings of transnational parenting? With specific reference to Chinese transnational parenting: does it result from "utilitarian familialism" (Ong, 1996, p. 748) and the normative tendencies of Chinese families to prioritize family interest above individual concerns? Is the nature of the arrangements as "contingent" and "volatile" as those of the Mexican immigrants in Man's study (2013) or should we understand transnational families as 'imagined communities' (cf. Anderson, 1983; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002) by which membership is a matter of choice and negotiation (in Baldassar, Baldock & Wilding, 2007)? Moreover, in what ways does the phenomenon alter general socio-cultural constructions of parenthood? The investigation of these questions unfortunately lay beyond the scope of this dissertation and will require more profound qualitative research.

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APPENDIX 1: The vignette

Objective of the vignette

The vignette was designed by the research team of the *Bet You!* Study. Its overall objective was to gather information on:

- How focus schools dealt with diversity;
- How focus pupils perceived their school's approach to diversity;
- What focus pupils considered 'good' or 'bad' ways for schools to deal with diversity.

Method

The vignette was adjusted according to the pupil's ethnic background, in this case Chinese. For each vignette there was a version for boys / girls to facilitate identification.

The pupils were asked to read the vignette. They were encouraged to ask for more details in case things were not clear to them.

Content of the vignette

The vignette portrays a fictional school that pays particular attention to ethnic diversity and intercultural learning. Throughout the curriculum considerable time and energy is invested in getting to know and appreciate other cultures as well as the own culture. It is a school that seeks to positively influence the self-esteem of her pupils as well as pupils' attitude towards other cultures. Within the vignette, the emphasis is on ethnic diversity, though other types of diversity are discussed as well (e.g. youth culture, linguistic or religious diversity…).

The school tries to connect with the distinct ethnic backgrounds of its pupils in different ways:

- Home language - 4 aspects (Nicaise & Harris, 2008, p. 303-305)
    - home language as a steppingstone for learning (e.g. use of home language in class)
    - home language as a socio-emotional factor (e.g. use of home language on the playground)
    - home language as a formal part of the curriculum (e.g. home language as an optional subject)

    - home language in communication with parents (e.g. use of interpreters, translation of written communication)
- Sensitivity about different cultural practices
- Knowledge of and positive attention to pupils' countries of origin
- Presence of teachers with a migration background

The school also encourages appreciation of other subcultures and styles through:

- Cultural exchanges in class
- Appreciation of individuality of pupils (in the broad sense - e.g in clothing, music, religion)
- Offer pupils a chance to learn a foreign language of choice

<u>The actual vignette (Translation from original vignette in Dutch)</u>

Yen/Chen is enrolled in the third year of secundary education and talks about her/his school:

My school, The Gate, is a secondary school that offers ASO, TSO as well as BSO. The student population is very diverse. There are many students with Chinese roots, just like me, but there are also youngsters from Morocco, Italy, Bulgaria, Poland and other countries. Of course, the school also has many students who are just native Belgians! On the playground and in the lounge area you always hear a mix of languages because we can use the language of our choice.

From this academic year on I'm enrolled in the elective Mandarin language class for two hours a week. There, I mostly learn how to write Chinese because I already speak it quite well. In the school's library there are books about China as well as the Chinese newspaper People's Daily. In my school you can also learn Spanish, Arabic, German, Polish, Bantu, Japanese, Italian and Turkish. Ching-wei for example, one of my Chinese friends from my class, studies German because his sister lives in Germany. When we are doing group assignments in other classes, like for example history, we can consult each other in our own language, but of course, the presentation of our work needs to happen in Dutch.

Last week in music class we talked with Mrs. Van Damme about famous pianists. She told us that one of the best contemporary pianists, Lang Lang, is a Chinese! She sometimes allows us

to bring our own favorite music to her class. As such, she also learns from us, she says. And I have also discovered many other musical styles, such as the "griot" (that's guitar blues from Mali) and "Nederhop (cool hip-hop from the Netherlands, which was brought to class by my neighbour Quinten).

What I really like about my school is that they are not so strict about our clothing style and appearance, as long as it is neat. So Quinten wears his typical hip-hop clothes and I usually wear black T-shirts (that's my favorite color) and a hat. Hatice always wears a headscarf and Martha does not leave the house without her bright red nail polish.

In June there's the school's open day. Then parents make all kinds of goodies to sell in the different food stalls. The money always goes to a good cause or it is used for students who cannot afford school trips. My mother is planning to prepare spring rolls again. She did so last year and she got a lot of compliments from the teachers and other parents. My mother participates in the parents' evenings three times a year. Sometimes my father joins her but not always. On those moments the school ensures the presence of an interpreter because my parents have difficulties understanding Dutch, like the parents of many other students. The school regulations have also been translated into eleven languages, even into Hindi!

One of my teachers, Mr. Li, has a Chinese father and has lived in China for a while. I enjoy his lessons because I feel he can somehow understand me and my Chinese friends better. Last year he spent an entire lesson on the World Exibition in Shanghai. Ms. Pauwels teaches us about Buddhism. There are fifteen students in her class. I am one of them. In our school you can choose between Catholic and Orthodox religion, Buddhism, Islam or social studies. Three times a year we "mix" all groups and then we teach each other something about 'our' religion or ethics. Last time, for example, Hatice organized a guided tour to the mosque nearby.

There are always many activities at our school, still I think there's something missing: I'd like to have another optional subject, such as theater, cooking or making websites. "

Interview questions based on vignette

1. Would you like to go to this school?
    - What do (don't) you like about this school?
    - Why (not)?
2. What is similar/different to your school?

(Themes covered in the vignette + additional guiding questions):

1. Mother tongue as an elective at school
    - Would you like it if your school offered your mother tongue as an elective at school? (<-> after-school lessons organized by the own ethnic community, learning from parents, etc.)
    - What language would you prefer to learn at school (mother tongue or other language) and why?
2. Use of mother tongue during classes (e.g. during group assignments)
    - Do you sometimes use your mother tongue to explain something to a classmate, or to discuss with peers?
    - What if your school allowed you to speak your mother tongue (other than Dutch) in class? Would you like it and/or would it help you to master the content of certain subjects?
    - What (other) advantages or disadvantages could this have?
3. Use of mother tongue on school grounds but outside of class
    - Are you allowed to speak any other language than Dutch on the playground? Do you know why (not)?
    - How does school personnel react when you do?
    - Does that bother you?
    - How do you like it when other pupils speak a foreign language that you do not understand?
4. Use of mother tongue in communication with parents (e.g. through interpreter)
    - Can your parents communicate with teachers in Dutch, for example at parents' evening? Can they understand letters in Dutch?
    - If not, does the school take actions to assist your parents?
5. Relationship between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds
    - How is the relationship between pupils from different ethnic background?
    - Do pupils tend to form cliques along ethnic lines?

- What is your opinion on that?

6. Ethnic origin of teachers
    - Are there any teachers with the same ethnic background as you?
    - Is the contact with such teacher any different than with other teachers and why?
7. Attention for pupils' country of origin + cultural traditions
    - Do your teachers pay attention in class to your country or origin (historical + contemporary characteristics and developments)?
    - Do you learn things at school about other countries and cultures? Enough or would you like to know more about it?
8. Religious instruction
    - Does the school offer different kinds of religious education?
    - Should they (not)? Why?
    - Do you learn in school about other religions? If so, how and what is it that you learn?
9. Youth culture & identity
    - What do you think of the way the exemplary school deals with the clothing styles and appearance of its pupils?
    - How is it in your school?
12. Is there any other subject that you would like to learn at school that is not offered today?
    - Could you also learn this outside of school?
    - What would the (dis)advantages be of learning this at school?

Sarah BRAEYE

Family strategies for education: The Chinese in Flanders.

2016